STORIES *from* WAGNER

J. WALKER McSPADDEN

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Stories from Wagner

by
J. WALKER MCSPADDEN

THESE are ancient legends of the German people — wonderful tales that were told in the long long ago when savage looking men clad in the skins of animals gathered round rude campfires. They believed in spirits then, in giants, dwarfs, gods and goddesses. And the stirring tales they related have been handed down through the centuries.

It was but natural that Richard Wagner, the great music dramatist of Germany, should turn to these heroic stories. In them he found a wealth of rich material to weave into the epic poems around which thunders his magnificent music.

All of the stories are here—stirring, romantic, glamorous tales of splendid fancy.

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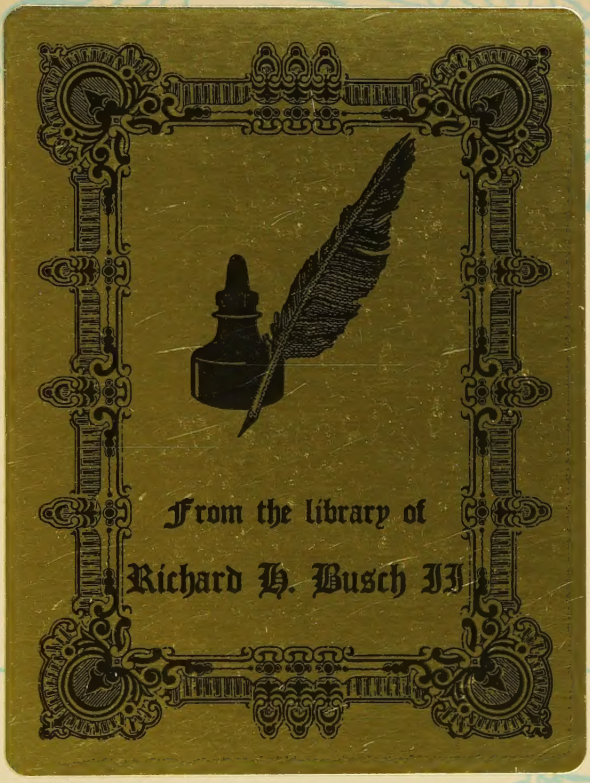

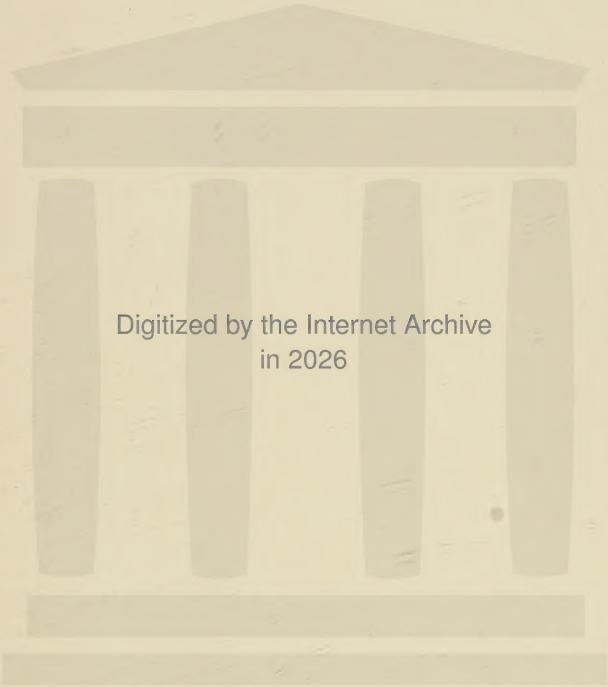

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Walter began his song

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By

J. Walker McSpadden

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOR

Grosset & Dunlap

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INTRODUCTION

IT would be a longer story than all the "Stories from Wagner" put together, to tell where these tales began and how they grew. Centuries before they were set to music in the soul of Richard Wagner, some of them had been chanted around rude camp-fires by savage-looking men clad in the skins of animals. They were repeated by word of mouth long before even the rudest art of writing was learned; and in various lands they were known, though the stories often differed. For in those days men believed in spirits, good and bad, and in giants, dwarfs, gods and goddesses. They told these stories to their children, just as real history is taught to-day; and later the legends were treasured not only for their deep interest but also because they showed how people lived and thought, long ago "while the world was in the making."

When Wagner, the great music-dramatist of Germany, was writing his wonderful operas, he found much of this rich material lying ready at his hand. Other parts he adapted to suit his needs. And it is the form in which he used the tales that has been followed in the simple retelling in the present volume: hence the justice of the title—"Stories from Wagner." Let us pause a moment

to see who this author was, and how he came to collect his themes.

Richard Wagner's career extended over the better part of the last century. He was born at Leipzig, May 22, 1813; he died at Venice, February 13, 1883. His whole life was a struggle, for his musical ideas were unlike any that had gone before. But he lived to witness a splendid triumph; and to-day his operas are produced more often than those of any other composer.

The following is the order in which the operas were first given:—

Rienzi, 1842
The Flying Dutchman, 1843
Tannhäuser, 1845
Lohengrin, 1850
Tristan and Isolde, 1865
The Master Singers, 1868
The Ring of the Nibelung, 1876
Parsifal, 1882

When Wagner was just beginning his career, he was in great doubt as to the choice of subjects for his operas. His first famous work, "Rienzi," was based upon Italian history. The English novelist, Bulwer-Lytton, has written a noted novel, using the same title and groundwork.

The legend of "The Flying Dutchman," which Wagner next chose, is one of the best-known sea-

myths in existence. In every country sailors tell of a mysterious ship that is seen in times of danger or distress. The captain of this vessel bears many names, but it is believed that the varying tales are only versions of one original legend. The German poet, Heine, wrote one version, and from this Wagner obtained the first idea for his opera.

With "Tannhäuser," Wagner entered upon the purely German themes which he was thenceforth to find so rich a mine. This story like many others was extremely old, yet it had been treated only rarely. Ludwig Tieck had written some verses upon it, and from these Wagner got his idea. Owen Meredith, the English poet, has also given us a charming version entitled "The Battle of the Bards." While Tannhäuser himself has been seldom written about, Walter von der Vogelweide—the minnesinger, and friend of Tannhäuser in the opera—is the subject of many poems, one of the last being by Longfellow. Sir Walter is set down in German history as an actual person, and many things are told about his marvellous gift of song.

Wolfram von Eschenbach—another historic character found in the operas—once wrote a famous old poem entitled "Parzival." Here Wagner discovered the germ of his beautiful story of "Lohengrin," following the lines of an old and well-nigh forgotten legend. The opera of "Parsi-

fal," though not completed till more than thirty years later, was also conceived at this time, and remained a cherished project. Legends of the Holy Grail, with which it deals, are familiar in every Christian country. There is much in the characters of both Parsifal and Lohengrin to remind us of Tennyson's Sir Galahad, in "Idylls of the King," which treats of the Holy Grail.

In "Tristan and Isolde" we have another legend which was well known during the Middle Ages. It was known in Wales, Ireland, Brittany and Germany, where it was a frequent theme with minnesingers, or wandering minstrels, like Walter von der Vogelweide. One of the earliest German authors to write down a version of it was a certain Godfried of Strasburg; and Wagner had at his command this and numerous other versions. English poets, also, have been greatly attracted by the tale. Sir Walter Scott, in "Thomas the Rhymer," told the simplest version. Matthew Arnold, Tennyson, and Swinburne have given notable poems of some length on the subject.

During the Middle Ages, and particularly in the thirteenth century, the city of Nuremberg was the seat of a famous musical guild, or training-school for poets and singers. In his "Master Singers," Wagner has followed history for his scene, characters and traditions, though he has made

droll use of them. The Master Singers have left substantial proof that they really lived. There are poems still in existence, signed by Sixtus Beckmesser, Veit Pogner and others; while Hans Sachs has left whole volumes behind, and his memory is so revered that he is looked upon almost as the patron saint of his city. Longfellow says in his poem on "Nuremberg":

> "Here Hans Sachs, the cobbler-poet, laureate of the gentle craft,
> Wisest of the Twelve Wise Masters, in huge folios sang and laughed!"

Wagner also obtained his idea for the contest of song from one of Hoffmann's novels entitled "Sängerkrieg." He made use of the same idea in "Tannhäuser."

Although "The Ring of the Nibelung," Wagner's grand lifework, was not presented until 1876, he had been at work upon its four parts for more than twenty-five years previously. He had published the first two parts without their musical score, in 1853. The other operas which appeared in the meanwhile were but breathing-places, so to speak, in the greater labour he had set himself to perform.

Wagner was especially fortunate in his choice of subject. The Nibelungen myth was a great

national epic—one of the oldest of the Teutonic race, dating back to the prehistoric era when Wotan, Fricka, Freia, Thor, Loki, and the other gods and goddesses were worshipped in the German forests. In the course of centuries several versions of the legend appeared, some being found even in Iceland under the name of "Eddas." In Germany a long epic poem came to be written by some unknown hand. It was called the "Nibelungenlied," and it is the most famous of all early German poems.

Of course Wagner had access to all this material. But he made so many changes from it in writing his own poem as to create a new story—one which, independent of the wonderful music which he wrote to accompany it, gives him place among the foremost writers of his nation. Volumes have been written pointing out the differences between his Nibelung story and the earlier legends.

But the purpose of this book is not to criticise, dissect, or compare. After giving these few needful names and dates, we wish merely to follow the splendid fancy of this singer of songs and teller of tales wherever in the realm of storyland it may chance to lead us.

One further word, however, of frank admission: While the spirit of the original is adhered to, and

very often the exact words are quoted, it has not been deemed best to follow the argument too closely. Instead, simplicity and directness have been considered preferable to the involved plots and symbolical actions of the operas.

The book is directed primarily to the needs of young people, and is sent out to them in the hope that sometime they may hear the dull booming of the Rhine about the Gold, the magic fire as it sweeps to encircle the sleeping maiden, the forest voices which greet the young and fearless hero, the chorus of the pilgrims, and the song which won the bride for a prize. All these and many other good things are held in store by the future. Meanwhile "the story's the thing," and we who will never grow too old to believe in giants, dragons and dwarfs, and the brave heroes who ride over the world doing heroic deeds, can still be thankful that Wagner lived and dreamed his dreams of the past.

J. W. M.

The Ring of the Curse

(*Der Ring des Nibelungen*)

PART I

THE RHINE-GOLD

HUNDREDS of years ago in a wonderful time called the dawn of the world there lived many strange beings which do not now exist. Gods and goddesses dwelt in the clouds that hovered about the mountain peaks. Great untamed giants roamed amid the valleys. Swarthy, misshapen dwarfs, called Nibelungs,[1] toiled in the caves of the under-world heaping up treasures of gold and silver which never did any one any good. Ugly dragons crawled about on the earth; while beautiful water-nymphs lived in the rivers and seas. Lastly there were heroes and savage men who struggled together for the mastery in that far-off day when the world was in the making.

How the end came to all these strange things, and how the reign of the gods finally ceased, will be set down in this fourfold story I am about to tell you.

[1] Pronounced Nee'bel-oongs.

In the clear depths of the river Rhine, in Germany, once dwelt three water-nymphs—lovely maidens who were very like other maidens, except that they passed their whole lives under the water and could not be seen by ordinary eyes. Fair were they in face, and graceful in form. Their eyes beamed gladness, for they had never known sorrow; while their long golden hair floated about them like a garment, or tossed upon the wave-crest as they played some merry game of hide-and-seek amid the grottoes of their watery world. They were called the Rhine-Daughters, and thus in frolicsome play did they spend their days—free from all care save one. It was this care and the sorrow following close upon it that caused the present story to be told.

Upon one of the highest rocks, deep down in the bed of the Rhine, was stored a great lump of pure gold, brighter and more dazzling than any other treasure ever known. It was also more wonderful than any other gold, because it contained the power of making its owner master of all the world. This treasure had lain undisturbed in the river's bed for so long that it had come to be known as the Rhine-Gold. It was watched over by the Rhine-Daughters, in whose care their father had left it. This was their sole duty—to keep guard night and day lest some thief should come and steal the priceless treasure.

One bright morning the maidens seemed unusually merry. They darted in and out the caverns with a speed which left the flying-fish far behind. They laughed and chattered and sang, but glancing from time to time up at the precious Rhine-Gold, to see if it still glittered upon its protecting crag.

Presently their happy noise at play attracted a passer-by, who clambered upon one of the jutting rocks to see what it was all about. The new-comer stood in the greatest contrast to the three laughing girls. He was a dwarf, little and ugly and crooked, with a humped back and long, claw-like fingers to match the eager, grasping look in his small eyes. He was Alberich, of the race of the Nibelungs—the earth-dwarfs who dug for treasure in the underground caverns, and hammered and toiled without ceasing for the gold that never did them any good.

"Ho, ho!" he exclaimed to the maidens. "A fair morning to you!"

The nymphs started in alarm at the harsh, croaking voice. Nor did their first sight of the visitor reassure them. But they replied, civilly enough,

"A fair morning to you, sir!"

Then one of them darted swiftly upward, singing as she went:

"Guard well the Gold;
'Twas just such a foe
Our father foretold."

Nevertheless Alberich had paid no attention to the Gold, so pleased was he by the nymphs and their gambols. And they in turn, losing their fear of the uncouth monster, and willing to tease him, asked him to catch them in their game of hide-and-seek. This he tried to do; but blinded by the unusual light, and stumbling awkwardly over the rocks, he could never keep up with their fairy-like antics. First one and then another would come near him or ascend the rocks, but it was always just beyond his reach. Finally their laughter and teasing made him angry, and he stopped short, refusing to be made sport of any longer.

Just then a ray of sunlight filtered down through the water and struck the Rhine-Gold. Instantly it glowed as though it were a mass of flame, reflecting a hundred shafts of light where one had smitten it. The whole river-bed was illuminated by the glorious rays.

The astonished dwarf looked toward the source of this splendour, and what he saw made his small eyes fairly bulge out with greed. Yet he concealed his amazement and waited to learn something about this splendid treasure without betraying his own interest. Fortune favoured him. His

unspoken question was answered by the Rhine-maidens who surged upward with a glad cry of "The Rhine-Gold! The Rhine-Gold!"

"What is this Rhine-Gold you are talking about?" asked the dwarf with a great show of indifference.

"What! Haven't you ever heard of the wonderful Rhine-Gold?" asked one of the maidens thoughtlessly. "We supposed it was famed over all the world."

"But I dwell in the under-world and hear not the things which are spoken among men. Tell me of it, I pray."

Then the maiden forgot her father's warning to guard the treasure closely. She also felt nothing but contempt for this awkward little man from whom they could so easily escape. She told the secret of the Gold in the words of a song:

"The realm of the world
To him shall it bring
Who out of this Gold
Shall fashion a Ring
Of magical power untold."

"Hum! Say you so?" said the dwarf, keeping his excitement down by a powerful effort, though his finger-nails fairly clawed into the flesh. "If your metal is as fine as all that, why doesn't some

one lay hands upon it and do all these great things?"

"Sister, sister! be careful!" said another of the nymphs.

But the first only laughed and replied, "What can this silly old fellow do? Let us have some more fun teasing him!"

Then the third maiden floated gracefully near. "Why doesn't some one seize the Gold?" she repeated. "'Tis because no one has yet been able to pay the price."

"What is the price?"

"This is it," she answered. "Listen:

"'He who forswears the might of love,
And all its pleasures manifold,
He only has the magic art
To mould the Ring from out the Gold.'"

"Pish! a pretty story you are telling me!" said the dwarf. "As though a little matter like doing without love should make a person master of the world!"

He made a great show of scorn while he said these words, but all the time he was edging quietly nearer the treasure.

"But love is the greatest thing in the world!" said the first maiden. "No one can do anything without its wonderful aid. Why, even you—poor old fellow—would not dare forswear it."

"*I* would not dare forswear it—eh?" exclaimed the dwarf with a snap of his fingers and a wild laugh of triumph. "*Love,* forsooth! What is love to me, when gold is in question? Hark you, Rhine-maidens! I renounce love for ever! Be my witness!"

And he sprang rapidly forward, before the nymphs could prevent him, clambered up the jagged rock and seized the coveted treasure.

"Our Rhine-Gold! Our Rhine-Gold!" shrieked the maidens. But it was too late: already he had disappeared in one of the clefts of rock leading to his cavernous home, and though they darted after him they could not find him in the dark depths. Only his mocking laugh came back to them.

"Ho, ho! *Love!* When all the world shall be mine!"

Now we have already seen that the nymphs and the dwarfs formed only a part of the strange world, so long ago. At the very time when Alberich was stealing the Gold and preparing to make the Ring of Power down under the earth, there was an unusual happening in the home of the gods far up on the mountains.

For a long time Wotan, the greatest of the gods, had desired a palace large enough to contain his kingly court. But he could find no one strong

enough to build it, until on a day two giants from the valleys below came into his presence. Large were they of shoulder and thigh, many times larger than ordinary men.

"We have come to build your palace," they said.

"Who are ye?" asked Wotan, looking piercingly at them with his single eye.

"I am Fafner, the frost-giant," answered one. "I can rend all these rocks asunder and build your palace in a single night, with the aid of my brother Fasolt, here."

Wotan was overjoyed to find some one who would undertake his cherished plan.

"What payment do you desire for this service?" he asked.

"You must give me the hand of your beautiful sister, Freia," answered Fafner.

Wotan frowned. He desired the palace above all things, just then, for it would enforce his visible rule over the world. But Freia was his favourite sister. Moreover, it was she who was the goddess of youth and beauty and who tended the tree of golden apples which kept the gods always young.

While Wotan was frowning and pondering to himself, his brother Loki whispered in his ear,

"Let them build the palace. We shall find another way out of the bargain."

Now Loki, god of fire, was the craftiest of all the

gods. So when Wotan heard his whispered advice his brow cleared, and he looked at the giants.

"So be it!" he commanded. "Build me the castle 'gainst another sunrise. It shall be Walhalla —the supreme home of gods and men."

The giants bowed and went their way. Presently the sound of mighty blows was heard, and terrific crashes as of the bursting asunder of rocks. All that day and night the tumult continued, while the earth shook to its very foundations.

The next morning the rising sun lit up a splendid spectacle. There stood Walhalla, magnificent home of the gods, upon the crest of a towering cliff. Its white walls gleamed and glistened. Its towers and buttresses were built of stones so large that they seemed placed for all eternity; yet the whole mass appeared as light and graceful as a fairy vision.

"Beautiful! Wonderful!" cried the gods and goddesses in rapture.

"Let us take up our abode in our new home!" said Wotan, with the delight of a schoolboy.

But just then the two giants appeared clad in their shaggy skins of slain animals.

"Hold!" said Fafner. "First give us in payment the goddess Freia as you promised us."

"That I cannot do," replied Wotan. "You must think of some other way for me to reward you."

"Not so," exclaimed the giants angrily, their hoarse voices making all the mountain quiver. "Give us the maiden, as you agreed, else we shall tear down the palace quicker than we built it."

And they placed themselves on each side of the trembling Freia.

"Touch her not!" cried two gods, as they sprang forth to protect their sister. "Do you not know," continued one, "that I am Thor, god of thunder, and that with one blow of my hammer I can crush you both?"

And he raised his hammer threateningly. But now the great Wotan interposed in his turn.

"Restrain your fury!" he commanded, stretching forth the dread Spear of Authority between the giants and the gods. "By this Spear the word of Wotan cannot be broken; and unless Fasolt and Fafner agree to accept other reward, they must e'en take our sister with them to the regions of frost."

At this command the contending ones fell back, but there arose a low cry of fear from the lovely Freia and a deep lamentation from the other gods. For how could they live without their sweet sister, she who gave them the apples of eternal youth?

Meanwhile Wotan had been casting his eyes impatiently from side to side. He was looking for his crafty counsellor, Loki, and wondering why he

did not appear with his aid; since he it was who had promised to find a way out of the bargain.

"Come, decide!" said the giants, again stepping forward.

"Only one hour more," pleaded Wotan. "I must confer with my counsellor who is just now absent."

"Only one hour, then," replied the giants.

"Send out messengers in search of Loki, god of fire," commanded Wotan. "Let him be summoned instantly."

But at this moment who should appear but Loki himself, walking in unconcernedly and looking about in feigned surprise as though he were the last person any one would wish to see.

"Good-morrow, all!" he said airily. "That is a beautiful castle I see upon yon mountain height. I have just been examining it from every side, and upon my word it would defy even my arts to destroy it!"

"Yes, yes," replied Wotan, impatiently, beginning to be a little ashamed of his fine Walhalla. "But that is not the point, just now. These giants demand our sister Freia as their reward; and you remember you promised to find a substitute for her."

The sly Loki arched his eyebrows in mock surprise.

"A substitute for *her!*" he exclaimed. "Why, how could that be possible? I should think that Fasolt and Fafner would rather have her than all the treasures in the world. Is she not the goddess of youth and beauty?"

At this the two gods Thor and Fro raised their weapons in great anger, and would have fallen upon Loki, had not Wotan restrained them. He knew the cunning of the latter, and was persuaded that Loki had found a plan.

"Yes," proceeded Loki as calmly as though there had been no interruption, "all the riches in the world would not take the place of Freia. Even the far-famed Rhine-Gold would hardly answer. And, speaking of the Rhine-Gold, do you know that I have just heard a strange story.

"While passing along the banks of the Rhine, I became aware of the sound of pitiful weeping and wailing. I turned me about to see whence the doleful sound came, and I beheld the three Rhine-Daughters. They were no longer joyous and carefree as was their wont, but they were beating their breasts and tearing their hair while they cried, 'Our Rhine-Gold! Our Rhine-Gold! Stolen! Stolen!' "

"What! Have they suffered the Rhine-Gold to be stolen?" asked Wotan in alarm.

" 'Tis as they said; for I stopped and questioned

The giants bore Freia away

them. They said that the dwarf Alberich had seized upon the treasure and fled away to his earth-caverns, where he was even now making the magic Ring of Power. He has set himself up as King of the Nibelungs, and he purposes to rule the whole world."

The giants Fafner and Fasolt leaned eagerly forward and drank in every word of Loki's story —as indeed he had intended they should.

"Ah! that would be a prize worth having!" they exclaimed, rubbing their huge hands. "Mighty Wotan, if thou wilt wrest this treasure from the Nibelung and give it to us, we will release the goddess."

But Wotan again grew disturbed and silent. He knew that the Gold rightfully belonged to the Rhine-Daughters, and that it would prove a danger even to the gods themselves, unless it were returned. The giants saw their advantage and followed it up.

"Decide for yourselves," they said, laying bold hands upon Freia. "Our work is done and we claim the reward. Either this maiden or the Rhine-Gold. And until you decide, she must follow us to the frost-land."

And unmindful of her cries of distress the giants bore Freia away, across the cliffs and down the mountain-side, the gods standing powerless to prevent.

As they stood gazing in dismay a thin mist arose from the valleys, and it seemed to touch all the gods with blight, as it were a frost. For the goddess of youth and beauty was gone, and old age had already begun to lay hand upon those that remained.

"Come, this will never do!" exclaimed Loki in jeering tones. "Will you stand in your tracks and let old age blight you?"

And then he began to taunt each of the gods separately, as was his wont.

"Look!" cried Fricka, wife of Wotan, "the golden apples even now are withering. Wotan, husband, behold thy doom! See how thy compact hath wrought ruin and wreck for us all!"

Wotan started up, fired by a sudden resolution.

"Up, Loki!" he commanded. "Follow me. We must fare to the caverns of night and seize upon this Gold."

"And then——?" asked Loki. "The Rhine-Daughters implored thine aid. Wilt thou restore it to them?"

"'Tis idle talk," retorted Wotan moodily. "Freia the goddess of youth and beauty must be ransomed, else we shall all perish."

"Then let us hence," said Loki, who had gained the point at which he had aimed from the outset. "Let us hence. I know a cleft in the rock, which serves as a chimney for the Nibelung's forge fires.

Perchance he is even now hammering out the Ring of Power. Come, let us descend into his cavernous dwelling."

So saying the god of fire wrapped his mantle about him and set forth, closely followed by Wotan with his dread Spear of Authority.

As two simple wayfarers they travelled down the rocky chasm—down, down, down, and still down, while the hammering from the forges grew louder and the sulphurous smoke came curling up more and more thickly, till it would have suffocated any one but a god.

At last they emerged into a huge cave, around which hurried hundreds of queer little people, each as ugly and crooked and dirty as Alberich. They were blowing the fires, pounding away upon huge masses of metal, or scurrying about with arm-loads of gold, silver, and precious stones.

Just then the two wayfarers heard a quarrelling in a side passage of the cave, when in came Alberich himself dragging another dwarf shrieking, by the ear. It was Mime, his own brother, but that made no difference with Alberich.

"Where's the helmet, you rogue?" he said. "It shall not be well with your skin if you don't give it up."

"Mercy, mercy!" howled Mime, the tears making little furrows down his dirty face. "I haven't got it done yet."

"Yes, you have! What is that you are trying to hide in your hands? Give it to me, I say!"

And Alberich seized the object which Mime had just dropped in terror.

"Ah! just as I thought!" continued the stronger brother. "Here is the magic helmet all complete; and this sly knave thought to keep it for himself. But I shall pay him for his treachery!

"Hark you, rascals!" he continued, turning to all the other dwarfs. "I am your king. Ye must henceforth serve me alone, and pile up all your treasure in the royal vaults. I have this day obtained the powers of magic which make you my servants. At this moment you see me not; but I shall make myself felt among you, I promise you!"

And with this speech he clapped the helmet upon his head and instantly vanished. But in his stead there came a pillar of mist, and out of the mist came his voice sternly commanding them to obey. Then the sharp lashes of a whip were heard right and left; and Mime fell groaning to the ground while the others retreated in terror, seemingly driven along a narrow way on the far side of the cavern. Alberich was beginning his reign with a vengeance!

Meanwhile the two celestial visitors had stood unnoticed in a side passage. While they debated as to the best means of making their presence known, Alberich came back in his true shape, car-

rying the helmet in his hand, fondling the Ring upon his finger and chuckling with glee. Then he espied the two gods, and his brow wrinkled darkly.

"Why come you to my caverns?" he demanded. "Know you not that I am king here, and that strangers are not welcome?"

"We have but come to see some of the marvels of which we have heard so much," said Wotan pacifically.

"Humph!" said Alberich. "You look quiet enough, but I think I know you both. Yet I fear you not, whether gods or men; for *I* am master here."

"And what if we are indeed gods, dear Alberich?" said Loki, taking off his mantle. "See, I am the god of fire, and your best friend. Do I not keep all your forges going?"

"Yes, that may be true," retorted Alberich. "But for all that I fear neither you nor Wotan the mighty. With this Ring made from the Rhine-Gold I can defy you all."

Alberich's accustomed low cunning had vanished before his sudden access of power. He was no match for the crafty god Loki.

"Oh, what a beautiful ring!" exclaimed the latter, bending forward admiringly. "Is it really made from the far-famed Rhine-Gold?"

"It is," said Alberich, swelling up. "I made it

myself, and its possession gives me everything in the whole world except love."

"But some people think that love is the chief thing," said Loki.

"Pooh! that's because they haven't the gold I have. The two do not go together anyway, and never will. As for me, give me gold and power." And he kissed the Ring.

"But what if some one stole the Ring while you slept?" persisted Loki.

"They couldn't," retorted the dwarf quickly. "See this helmet? That silly brother of mine yonder in the corner has just made it for me out of some more of this fine Rhine-Gold. With it I can change myself into any form I choose, and defy the sliest of robbers."

"Oh, that cannot be!" replied Loki. "Only the gods can do such things. Unless I saw such a marvel with my own eyes, I never would believe it."

Alberich looked with scorn upon this doubting fellow; then, willing to prove his boast, he put the helmet upon his head and muttered a few words. Instantly he was gone, and in his stead a huge serpent came wriggling along the floor, stretching its hideous jaws toward Wotan and Loki. The latter fled in pretended terror, while Wotan laughed calmly. The snake then disappeared, and the dwarf once more stood before them.

"*Now* do you doubt my power?" he asked proudly.

"Oh, it was wonderful!" exclaimed Loki, rolling his eyes. "I couldn't have believed it possible! But I should think it would be a great deal harder to turn yourself into something small?"

"Not at all," replied the Nibelung. "Watch this!"

And before the gods were aware, he was gone again. They looked high and low, and there among the small stones a toad came hopping toward them.

"Quick, put your foot on him!" exclaimed Loki.

Wotan put his foot upon the toad, and instantly it was gone, and in its place Alberich lay struggling vainly to get out.

"Let me up! You are crushing me!" screamed the dwarf.

"Not until you give us every bit of the Rhine-Gold, the helmet and the Ring," said Wotan.

"You can have all but the helmet and the Ring; and there's a lot of it—beautiful Gold!" whined Alberich.

"No, *all* of it!" said Wotan.

"You can have the helmet, too. Ough! you're smashing me!"

"The Ring and *all,* I tell you! Here, Loki, bind him with that rope!"

"Then take the Gold, the helmet and the Ring!" cried the dwarf despairingly.

They bound him, and let him up. As soon as he could catch his breath, he continued,

"Take the Ring and *all!* But listen well to what I say. My curse rests upon it for ever. Cursed be he who owns it, whether eating or sleeping or waking. Cursed be he and all his, whether god or devil. Sorrow and unhappiness shall go with this Gold through all the ends of the earth!"

Notwithstanding this dread curse, the gods seized the Ring from off his finger and lost no time in making off with the treasure, leaving the dwarf grovelling upon the floor and muttering fierce words against them. All their care now was to ransom their sister and drive away the mists of old age.

On their way up the mountain height they met the two giants bearing away the struggling Freia in their clutches.

"Hold!" commanded Wotan; "bear her no farther. We have brought the gold to ransom her."

"Is it the far-famed Rhine-Gold?" asked Fafner.

"See for yourselves!" said Loki, casting the glittering heap upon the earth. "In all the world ye will not find its like."

The giants gazed greedily upon the hoard, and drew near to parley.

" 'Tis indeed a wonderful treasure," they said; "but the mass must equal in height and breadth the stature of this comely goddess."

"So be it," answered Wotan, and he commanded that staves be set upright in the ground and that the Gold be heaped between them. Thor and Fro and others of the gods had now arrived upon the scene—all overjoyed at the prospect of Freia's release; for already the blighting mist was beginning to lift, though it yet concealed the fair towers of Walhalla. Meanwhile Loki had been careful to withhold the Ring and the helmet from the rest of the hoard, which was now quickly heaped up between the upright staves.

At last, just as the Gold was exhausted, the pile rose above the top of Freia's head.

"Here, take the treasure," said Wotan, "and release our sister unto us."

"Nay, not so," said Fafner. "I see a hole in the heap, and through it gleams the goddess's hair, brighter than any gold. You must fill the hole. Cast on the helmet which yonder Loki is bearing."

Wotan could scarce restrain his rage at this rude bartering of his sister, while the impetuous Thor fingered his mighty hammer nervously. But Wotan saw it was useless to refuse. He made a sign of command to the unwilling Loki, and the latter cast the helmet on the heap.

Fafner again walked around it, looking closely on every side.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "Here is just one more little crack. But through it I can see the gleam of the goddess's lovely eyes. You must place the Ring here to make the ransom complete."

"Never!" cried Wotan furiously.

"Very well, then. We shall be forced to take the goddess with us."

And once more Fasolt laid his rude hands upon the shrinking maiden.

Thereupon a great tumult began. The voices of the gods rose in entreaty to Wotan to give up the Ring and save their sister and themselves. Thor sprang forward with uplifted hammer, while the hoarse voices of the giants bade defiance to them all. Again the dread mist crept up from the valleys, and darkness descended from the clouds. Still Wotan remained defiant. He was turning away in anger from the tumult, when out of a cleft in the rock a weird bluish light broke forth, and there emerged a woman of dignified and noble mien. Her long black hair swept upon the ground, and her flowing robe seemed made of all the leaves and growing things of the soil. She was Erda, the spirit of Mother-Earth, gifted with wisdom and foresight such as was not given even to the gods themselves.

Erda stretched her hand out warningly toward Wotan.

"Yield, O Wotan!" she cried. "Escape the curse of the Ring, and all the hopeless woe it entails!"

"Who art thou, boding spirit?" demanded Wotan. And in a chanting voice came back the reply:

"All that was I know,
All that is I know,
All that ever shall be done,
This as well I know.

Erda the name I bear,
The Fates my daughters are,
Danger threatens dire,
This has drawn me near.

Hearken! hearken! hearken!
All that is shall end.
Heed ye well, ere dawn of doom,—
Beware the cursèd Ring!"

As the chant ended, the bluish light died away and with it vanished the warning figure.

"O stay, dread spirit!" cried Wotan. "More would I learn!"

But only silence answered him; and after gazing into the darkness in anxious thought, he turned suddenly and approached the giants.

"Here is the Ring," said he sternly, drawing it from his finger and placing it upon the heap. "Begone, and leave us our sister! But a curse has fallen upon the Gold."

And so it proved. The gods themselves were witness of the first-fruits of the curse. For as the two giants fell greedily to work gathering up the treasure, a dispute arose. Fasolt claimed that Fafner was taking more than his rightful share. They came to blows over it, when Fafner smote Fasolt to the ground with a blow so heavy that it killed him. Then the victor, unmindful of his deed, hastily gathered up all the wealth and departed, while the gods stood around silent and amazed that the curse should descend so swiftly. And Wotan foresaw in this tragic moment the awful doom which was one day to descend upon them all, because the Gold had not been restored to the Rhine-Daughters.

But his gloomy thoughts were broken just then by a mighty crash, like a peal of thunder. There upon the cliff leading to the beautiful new palace which had cost so much, stood Thor wielding his hammer upon the encircling clouds. Flashes of lightning burst forth. The clouds and mist rolled away, revealing Walhalla in all its splendour; while from their feet, in dazzling radiance, gleamed a rainbow-bridge leading across the chasm to its portals.

"Come! let us go over to our new home!" said Wotan, taking his wife Fricka by the hand.

And followed by the laughing gods and goddesses, who surrounded Freia, fairest of the group, they went across the rainbow-bridge and entered the stately halls of Walhalla.

The setting sun shone brightly on the scene. The clouds had melted away into blue sky, leaving a soft radiance which seemed to encircle their new home in a halo of delight. The evening fragrance of the valleys came up to them redolent with the springtime of growing things. As they trod the shining pathway the jests and merriment of the gods showed their gladness in this new home that had been made for them at so great a cost.

Still Wotan was not happy. He had decided seemingly for the best; but as he crossed the arching bridge he heard voices from the valley far beneath him, rising like the tones of conscience or the warnings of fate. It was the mournful song of the Rhine-Daughters:

"Rhine-Gold! purest Gold!
How fair thy gleam,
Thy wealth untold!
But now thy rays
Light not the stream;
Ah! give them back—
Give back the gleam,
Rhine-Gold!"

PART II

THE WAR-MAIDENS

THE new home of the gods proved to be as beautiful within as it had appeared without. When they had all crossed the arching rainbow-bridge, loud shouts of joy and admiration arose; for it was the most splendid palace that gods or mortals could ever imagine. Long porticos and galleries with huge sculptured pillars ran in every direction, leading to cool fruit arbours, or open courts where silvery fountains splashed. Great rooms opened up with ceilings so high that they seemed to take in the sky itself. The spacious floors were paved with burnished gold, and the walls set with polished stone and fine jewels, so that they blazed with light as bright as the noonday.

On every side of the palace were smooth greenswards, and groves of stately trees. And in the midst of the largest grove of all grew the wonderful tree bearing apples of gold, from which Freia fed all the divine family to make them immortal.

For a long time the gods and goddesses lived in Walhalla quite happily. Each morning they found some new beauty to admire. Each evening they came together for a feast or entertainment.

But in one heart there was no happiness, and that was the heart of the mighty Wotan himself. His beautiful home, the dream of his life, was finished. But at what a cost! The curse of the Rhine-Gold would come upon them, unless the stolen treasure were returned to its rightful guardians. The gods themselves would be destroyed, if they kept not their honour.

So Wotan sat apart from the rest, and his brow grew dark with forebodings. Fricka, his wife, gently chided him for his gloom but to no avail, and even the beautiful Freia could no longer make him smile. When any of the other gods praised the beauty of the palace, he would nod his head and answer: "Its price was great."

Finally Wotan could endure his anxiety no longer. Knowing that unless some way were found to restore the Gold they would be in constant peril, he resolved to consult Erda, the earth-spirit. So, one day he took his Spear of Authority and went forth into the world to find a way out of the trouble which had come to him with Walhalla.

The weeks grew into months and the months into years, while Wotan was gone. The other gods sought him in vain, but could hear no tidings. They wondered what had become of him, and the feasting and revelry gave way to sad forebodings. Only Fricka, the queen, went about with some measure of confidence.

"Be not sad," she said. "Wotan will return soon, bringing with him some great means of safety and content."

Fricka spoke true. One fair day at early dawn the gods were awakened by the sound of war-like singing. It was entirely different from their own music, and it seemed borne to them on the wings of the wind. Nearer and nearer came the song, swelling into a splendid strain of triumph. Then flying figures were descried, and the watchers at the window saw Wotan returning to them as it were through the clouds. He was in the midst of a company of maidens, whose faces were fair but who were strong and soldier-like. Each rode upon a powerful horse, and, wonder of wonders, the horses had wings like eagles and flew swiftly through the air!

There were nine of these horses and riders in all, and so fast did they ride that they had reached the palace gates, dismounted, and were being led within by Wotan almost before the first strains of music had died away.

You may believe that all the gods and goddesses were exceedingly glad when they saw Wotan again; and they hastened out upon the battlements to greet him and give him love and honour. To one and all he replied full pleasantly. His brow was clearer than it had been in many a day; and it was with the

sprightliness of youth that he led the nine fair warriors up the broad palace steps. Then turning he addressed his court.

"These are the War Maidens," he said, "who come to guard our kingdom from its enemies. It is their mission to ride up and down in all the world, to choose the bravest heroes who have fallen in battle, and to bring them to Walhalla. With all these heroes we shall be protected from peril in the evil days to come."

Then Wotan introduced each War Maiden by name, beginning with Brunhilde, who was the strongest and loveliest. And they were welcomed royally to the palace by all who lived therein. The golden apples of life were given them to eat, and they became immortal.

Day by day the War Maidens rode forth into battle, seeking for the bravest men. Whenever they found one who had fallen in the forefront of conflict, they carried him to Walhalla where he became immortal. There was much fighting in the world in those days, so the palace soon received many mighty soldiers, and Wotan grew light of heart. For now, he thought, he could defy the dwarf's curse and all the powers of the underworld. So he trained his soldiers constantly, and had them continually in battle, one against another. And if one by chance received a wound it healed of itself through magic power.

Still the loss of the Gold and of the Ring was an ever-present danger. Wotan knew this, and cast about for some means to restore the treasure to the Rhine-Daughters so that the peril might be removed.

Now Fafner the giant had taken the Gold to a cave in the midst of a dense forest. By the aid of the magic helmet he had changed himself into a fierce dragon, and in this shape he guarded the mouth of the cave night and day. So you see that he wasn't getting very much pleasure out of his hoard.

Being a god, Wotan of course knew where Fafner the dragon lay hid. But neither he nor any of the gods could attack Fafner or lay hands upon the treasure. It had been given the giant in open barter and so was beyond their recall. But Wotan reasoned that if some earth-born hero could be found brave enough to slay the dragon, the Gold could be secured. Failing this, the dwarf Alberich might in the end be crafty enough to regain it and wreak his vengeance upon the gods.

The peril was still great therefore, in spite of the warriors in Walhalla. Wotan realised all this and resolved to journey again through the world in quest of a hero to attack the dragon. For many days he searched without success. Then he chose a son of his own for the great task, living with him

as a simple forester while the boy grew up, and training him to warlike deeds. The boy's name was Siegmund, and as he reached young manhood he was straight as a young pine-tree in the forest and strong as the oak which defies the winds of heaven.

While Siegmund was still a youth a great sorrow befell him. Sieglinde, a young girl of his own age with whom he had grown up, and whom he looked upon as a sister, was seized by a fierce hunter and carried away to his home in the forest. For many months Siegmund sought to rescue her, but without success. He grew to manhood with this object before him, and vowed eternal warfare against the hunter and all his clan,—a vow Wotan aided him to keep, until the very name of Siegmund became a terror to the hunter.

Then another sudden grief befell the young warrior. Wotan mysteriously went away one day, leaving no trace and no message save that when Siegmund should be in direst need he would find a trusty sword at hand to aid him. Siegmund now felt forsaken indeed; and he roamed about aimlessly in the forests, hunting the wild beasts, helping people in distress, or fighting against the hunter's tribe.

One night, utterly spent from his wanderings, he sought shelter in a house built in a peculiar manner

round the trunk of a great oak-tree. Seeing no one within the main room he entered, closed the door behind him, and lay down exhausted in front of the fire, where he soon fell fast asleep.

Presently a maiden came into the room. She expected to find the hunter there, for this was none other than his house, although Siegmund did not know it. When instead of the master of the house the maiden saw the stranger lying upon the hearth, she sprang back in sudden fear. But the poor man did not move, so she came gently to his side, to see whether he were alive or dead. Siegmund stirred uneasily in his sleep, then, wakening, tried to utter a few words, but his parched lips gave forth little sound. Seeing his pitiable state, the maiden hastened to give him a drink. It revived him somewhat, and he sat up and gazed around. The maiden gave him more of the cup and gently asked him whence he came. He answered and began telling her of his wanderings without revealing his name. Just then the hunter himself arrived; but neither he nor Siegmund recognised the other as his sworn enemy; and the hunter, noting the young man's distressed condition, bade him welcome for the night and invited him to the table to share his food. Siegmund accepted the invitation joyfully, and soon found his strength returning to him in the meat and drink.

In answer to his host's questions, he told the story of his past adventures; and the hunter found, for the first time, that his guest was the foe whom he had long been seeking to slay.

"Ha! I know you now!" he exclaimed, springing to his feet. "It is *you* who have done so much harm to me and mine! I would make you answer for your deeds here and now, were it not for the sacred laws of hospitality. But to-morrow I shall meet you! At sunrise be ready to fight and give me full satisfaction!"

Siegmund was astonished in his turn, but could not refuse the challenge. The hunter left him with these words, bidding the maiden also go into another room.

Left to himself the young man fell again into heaviness of spirit. It seemed to him that sorrow and trouble had followed him all the days of his life. He mused over his present defenceless condition—alone, unarmed and under his enemy's very roof. Then he recalled his father's promise, that a sword would be ready at his hand when his need was direst. Somehow the thought of this promise brought comfort to him, and he fell into a quiet slumber.

After a time, during the stillness of night, a door opened softly and the maiden came toward him.

"Up!" she said, gently rousing him. "Up and

flee for your life! The hunter has been planning mischief against you, but I gave him a sleeping draught."

"Why should I flee?" said Siegmund. "Give me but a sword and I turn my back upon no man! But who are you, fair lady, who do this kindness to a stranger? Methinks I have seen your face in earlier days than this."

"And I also seem to remember you," she answered, gazing at him earnestly. "My story is not a long one, but it is sad. When I was a little girl, this cruel hunter carried me away from home, and he has compelled me to live with him ever since. But one day during a feast a strange-looking man with only one eye came in, bearing a mighty sword. He drove the sword to the hilt in the trunk of yonder tree, with one sweep of his arm, declaring that it was for only one man—the man who should be able to pull it forth again. Many stout men that day and since have tried to claim the sword, but there it sticks, where you may see the firelight strike the handle. Perchance, poor stranger, it was left for you!"

"Ah, now I know my father's words were true!" Siegmund cried, joyously. "See! the sword is mine!"

And laying hold of the handle he drew the shining blade as easily as though the tree had been its scabbard.

"And thou, also, I know, my heart's best! Thou art Sieglinde, for whom I have sought all these years. Dost thou not remember thine old playmate Siegmund?"

She gazed at him first with startled look; then a tender light of memory and love dawned in her eyes. Siegmund stretched out his arms to her and the two were reunited in a fond embrace.

"Come!" said Siegmund; "now will I flee, and thou must go with me. My father's sword shall shield us both, and never again while I live shall this robber have thee in his clutches."

The moon was shining brightly on this warm night in early spring. The wide world seemed to beckon her two children forth; and answering her summons and the glad call of their own hearts they fled away.

King Wotan knew all these things. He knew that his dearly loved son Siegmund had found the magic sword, and had fled from the hunter's home. He foresaw also that the hunter would rise up full of wrath the next day, and pursue Siegmund to kill him. This must be prevented. The god summoned Brunhilde before him.

"Wisest and fairest of War Maidens," he said, "in yonder mountain gorge thou wilt discover a young man and a maiden who are dear to me.

The maiden has been stolen away from a hunter who held her against her will, and the hunter now pursues the young man with intent to slay him. It is my will that he be not slain, but that he gain the victory over the hunter. See thou to it!"

Brunhilde gladly listened to Wotan's behest.

"It shall be done as thou desirest!" she exclaimed. "Hoyo-to-ho!"—the musical shout of the War Maidens came from her lips as she sprang from cliff to cliff and disappeared.

But she had hardly gone before Fricka, Wotan's queen, entered in a chariot drawn by two rams. Now Fricka was goddess of love and justice, and it grieved her that Siegmund should be allowed to take Sieglinde away with him as he had done.

"Justice, O Wotan!" she cried, "against the young man Siegmund! The hunter from whose house he fled away, carrying the maiden Sieglinde, has called to me for help, and I have promised to aid him."

"The hunter held the maid against her will," replied Wotan.

"Nathless his right to her had become recognised among men. So she must be restored to him, else men will say that there is no justice in the world."

Wotan's brow was wrinkled moodily. He knew that Sieglinde had dwelt so many years under the hunter's roof that all men believed she rightfully

belonged there. Yet in his heart he longed to protect his son.

Fricka saw the struggle but would not relent. She added many words to what she had said and urged her case so strongly that every law the gods had made seemed enlisted in the hunter's cause. At last Wotan, heavy in spirit, agreed to give the victory to him.

After Fricka had departed, he called Brunhilde again to him and told her of his last decision. Brunhilde was full of grief when she learned that she must aid the hunter against Siegmund.

"Why dost thou do this, O father?" she asked gently.

"Because the laws of the gods demand it," he answered.

Then the sorrow-stricken Wotan unburdened his heart to her and told her of the Rhine-Gold; of the Ring that had been fashioned from it; of the curse that had followed; and of many other things which we have set forth in this book.

"The curse of the Ring is the fate of Siegmund," he concluded. "That is why I am powerless to protect him. See that thou dost obey my latest command!"

So saying he departed, amid the rumblings of a thundercloud, leaving Brunhilde full of sorrow at the strange tale she had heard and the sad errand she must perform.

But she turned her steps dutifully down the mountain gorge, and there in a sheltering cave she found the young man and maiden. Sieglinde had become tired out from their wanderings, and Siegmund had borne her into the cave and was supporting her head upon his knee, while smoothing back the stray locks of gold from her lovely forehead. So intent was he upon this devotion that he did not see Brunhilde when she came into the entrance.

If the War Maiden had longed to befriend these two before she saw them, how much more did her heart soften when she beheld this sweet picture! But her duty must be done. She called softly to Siegmund and he raised his head.

"I am the War Maiden," she said, "and am sent to warn thee of thy fate. Thine enemy follows hard upon thy heels; and none who look upon my face survive a battle."

"I fear not for the battle," answered Siegmund stoutly. "This magic sword was left me by my father, and with it I must surely be victorious!"

"It will avail thee not; for the gods have decreed that thou must die. But glory awaits thee in Walhalla, whither I am summoned to bear thee after death."

"What is Walhalla?" he asked.

"It is the Hall of Heroes, among whom thou wilt be first."

"Will I find my father there, and my sweet comrade Sieglinde?"

The search for these two had consumed the youthful warrior's whole life, so his voice trembled eagerly as he asked this question.

Brunhilde smiled, then shook her head sadly.

"Thy father?—Yes, in Walhalla shalt thou find him. But Sieglinde cannot come to thee there."

"Then take my greetings to Walhalla!" he exclaimed.

"Greet for me Wotan!
Hail to my father
And all the heroes!
Hail the War Maidens;
For now I follow not thee!"

By this time Brunhilde's heart had become so touched that she boldly resolved to disobey Wotan's last command, and do as he really desired. Smiling upon Siegmund, she bade him be of good heart, as she had only been testing his courage. Then she told him she would be with him and aid him in the coming strife.

Even while she spoke the hunter's horn was heard, and soon the man himself came hastening fiercely along. He did not see Siegmund at first, for a heavy storm had come up, while the heavens seemed rent with terrific crashes of thunder. The din finally aroused the sleeping Sieglinde, and she

gazed around wildly. Siegmund had sprung out of the cave to confront his enemy; and there in front of the cave he stood revealed by a flash of lightning battling strongly with the hunter. Sieglinde uttered a cry of grief and was about to rush between them when another sudden blaze of light made her draw back. At one side she beheld the War Maiden standing ready to protect Siegmund. The young man pressed upon the hunter and was about to strike him to the earth with his trusty sword, when a glowing red flame burst through the clouds. Wotan himself appeared with his dread Spear and stretched it across the sword. The magic blade broke in sunder, and Siegmund fell dead, pierced by the hunter's weapon. But the hunter himself did not survive the conflict, for a glance from the single blazing eye of the angry god stretched him lifeless on the sward.

When Wotan appeared, Brunhilde started back amazed and fearful. She began to realise what it meant to disobey the god's command. Hastily seizing the fainting form of Sieglinde she sprang upon her winged steed and fled swiftly from the tragic scene. Far and fast through the storm she sped, glancing around fearfully ever and anon, and fancying each rumble of the thunder was Wotan's voice. Then she turned her horse's head toward the summit of a lofty crag. It was the usual meet-

ing-place of all the War Maidens on their way to Walhalla. Soon the crag came in sight, and there awaiting her were her eight companions, hailing her swift approach with "Hoyo-to-ho!" their battle cry.

Hardly taking time to answer their joyous greetings, Brunhilde placed Sieglinde gently on the ground and cried,

"Save us, O my sister! Save us from the wrath of Wotan!"

"Why, what crime hast thou committed?" cried the other War Maidens in alarm.

"I have disobeyed the god's command, and even now he rides hard after me upon the wings of the tempest! Save this innocent mortal, at least! *She* has done no wrong."

"I do not wish for life!" exclaimed Sieglinde, who had just recovered consciousness. "Why should I live when Siegmund is dead? I pray you draw your sword and slay me!"

"Not so," said Brunhilde soothingly. "The Fates decree that thou must live. And see, I have saved for thee the Sword of Need which was broken in Siegmund's hands. Keep it for his son, the hero who shall know no fear, and he shall do mighty deeds with its mended blade."

So saying Brunhilde drew from the folds of her cloak the two pieces of the broken sword and gave

them to Sieglinde and whispered in her ear words of tenderness and balm. And Sieglinde's face lost its hopeless look, and she promised to go wherever the War Maiden might direct.

"Haste thee, then!" urged Brunhilde. "The time is short. In only one place wilt thou be safe from Wotan, and that is the depth of yonder forest. There dwells Fafner the dragon, and there Wotan never ventures because of the curse of the Ring.

The tempest had increased in fury while Brunhilde was speaking. The dense darkness shielded Sieglinde while she hurried away. She was scarce gone, hugging the precious sword, when a terrific clap of thunder shook the whole cliff and Wotan appeared in a flash of light.

"Brunhilde! Brunhilde!" he called.

Brunhilde did not answer; and the other War Maidens, braving his anger through loyalty and love for their sister, hid her in their midst.

"Brunhilde!" again thundered Wotan, "stand forth! Art afraid to hear thy doom?"

"Not so, O mighty father!" replied Brunhilde; and she stepped forward proudly and knelt at his feet.

"Ah, Brunhilde! how couldst thou disobey my command?" asked Wotan more in sadness than in anger. "Thou hast brought thy fate upon thyself."

"I but tried to save one who was dear to thee," she answered.

"But thou didst violate my will, and henceforth can be a War Maiden no more. Thou must descend to earth, lose thy immortality, and live the life of any other woman."

On hearing this terrible decree, by which she lost the rank of goddess, Brunhilde sank upon the ground with a piteous cry.

"Have mercy, O Wotan!" she pleaded. "I tried to meet the wishes of thy heart, as given in thy first command. Do not banish me for ever from my dear sisters and thy beloved presence. Have mercy!"

"Have mercy!" cried her sisters, stretching out their hands toward the god.

"Silence!" said Wotan solemnly. "I have spoken, and it must be done. Ah, dearly loved maiden, how gladly would I save thee if it were so decreed! But thou must sink to the ground in deep sleep. And it shall come to pass that in after years the man who shall awaken thee shall claim thee for his bride."

"As for ye other maidens," he continued, glancing around with a flash of the eye, "beware how ye fail to keep faith with me again! And come not again into my presence this day."

The War Maidens fled in woe and terror at this

speech, leaving Brunhilde and Wotan alone upon the rock. The sky was clearing, the wind was dying away, and the moon came forth and looked down upon the scene. There was silence for many long moments, until Brunhilde, unable to endure it, rose slowly to her feet in all her beauty and pride, yet with wild entreaty in her voice.

"Oh, father, father!" she pleaded, "save me from this fate, for the honour of all gods! Do not place me within reach of any coward among men, who might chance to awaken me. If I must fall asleep to wake a mortal woman, grant me this last request. Place me in some spot so hedged about with danger that none but the bravest of all men may find me and claim me for his own!"

Wotan gazed at her—all the old love and pride for her shining in his eyes. He gently drew her to him and kissed her upon the eyelids.

"It shall be as thou dost wish," he said. "I shall shield thee with a barrier of living fire so that none save a true hero can rescue thee. And now farewell, my darling child! How I shall miss thee in Walhalla, and on our rides of glory, thou dost little know. Farewell! farewell!"

Brunhilde clasped her arms about his neck and smiled for the last time in his face. He bent down and kissed her again, and yet again. A deep sleep came over her and she sank slowly down. Wotan carried her tenderly to a low mound of moss upon

the very crest of the towering rock, and there he placed his shield over her to protect her from all harm. Again he gazed long and mournfully on her features, then closed the visor of the helmet she wore, and turning began a mystic waving of his Spear of Authority. He ended by summoning Loki, god of fire.

"Loki, hark,
Hitherward haste,
As I found thee first,
In a fiery waste;
As once thou didst fly
In fiery display;
As then I did call thee
I call thee to-day!
Arise with thy flaming—
Encircle this place,
To daunt the craven
Whom my spear could not face!
Loki! Loki! arise!"

At the last call he struck the rock thrice with his Spear, and instantly a stream of fire gushed forth and licked upward in tongues of flame from every side. Higher and wider they spread, leaping and crackling till they formed a complete circle round the mossy bed where Brunhilde lay sleeping. And as they swept upward in the night air they seemed to blend in strains of music sweet as the thrumming of a harp and soft as the lullaby of a mother crooning her child to sleep.

PART III

SIEGFRIED THE FEARLESS

SEVERAL years passed by while Brunhilde lay in her enchanted sleep. Summers and winters came and went, yet still she lay there unharmed in her magic circle of fire, and growing no whit older than when she first sank down in slumber, in all her youth and beauty.

Down in the depths of the forest far below the crag on which she rested, Fafner the dragon still guarded the Rhine-Gold and Ring. He had come to be known only as the dragon, because—giant though he was—he had always been afraid to leave this hideous shape lest some one should overcome him and seize the treasure.

And he had good cause to fear. Although the Gold bore a curse with it, there was more than one who sought to lay hand upon it. Wotan the mighty had even forsaken the beautiful palace of Walhalla which cost him so much, and was now roaming over the earth seeking some hero to slay the dragon. He had indeed come to be known as the "Wanderer" because of his constant search. The dwarfs

also had by no means forgotten the glittering hoard which had been taken away from them. Alberich went about in sullen discontent, biding his time; while Mime, his brother who had made the magic helmet, could not forget the Gold night or day. Mime knew where the dragon lay hid, so he set about laying plans to outwit or slay him.

Now the dwarfs had always lived deep down in the caves of the earth. They had seemed actually afraid of the sunlight, and it may be that they were afraid of their own shadows, for no greater cowards ever lived. But with all their cowardice they were sly, and had a wonderful faculty of finding out all sorts of secrets. Mime had discovered the whole story of the Gold, the helmet, the Ring, the curse, the building of Walhalla, and the dread which had fallen upon the gods. He learned of all this and many other things; and he laughed and rubbed his hands craftily.

"Aha!" he said, "*I* will find a way to seize the Ring and rule the whole world! I will watch this dragon day and night, and sooner or later I shall surprise him."

So Mime the dwarf summoned up courage enough to appear above ground. He betook himself to Fafner's forest, where he soon found the huge monster crouched before the door of his cave. For many days and nights Mime lay hid, waiting

for a chance to slip past the great beast, but no such chance came.

"I shall have to kill him," said Mime to himself. And at the bare thought his teeth chattered with fear. "But even if I had a sword stout enough and long enough to reach his heart, I should never have courage enough to wield it."

This thought was very discouraging to him, yet he was unwilling to give up hope of the Gold. For many more days he pondered and plotted, till at last he thought of a plan.

"I have it!" he exclaimed, slapping his thigh. "I shall build a blacksmith's forge hard by here in the wood, where I shall make nothing but swords. At last my skill will bring forth the best blade in the world, and I shall offer it to the mightiest hero who may come riding by. Who knows? Perhaps one will be found brave enough to fight the dragon, when I tell him just how to do it. Then after he kills the dragon—we will see!"

He chuckled at the cunning plan he had made, while the evil light in his eyes boded no good for the after fate of the chosen hero.

This plan seemed wild, yet it was the best that offered, so Mime began at once. He built his smithy, and having been used to this trade all his life in the under-world, he speedily felt quite at home. Soon his forge-fires shone brightly through

the forest, and the sound of his hammering disturbed the birds and beasts.

One day during a lull in his work he heard a faint tap at his door. He asked harshly who was there, but receiving no reply he peered cautiously outside. There on the threshold lay a poor woman feebly holding a little child in her arms. Her strength seemed spent, and even the rough Mime felt pity for her distress. He carried her into the smithy and laid her near the forge-fire, then hastened to pour some cordial down her throat. The drink revived her slightly and she sat up and tried to lift the child.

"Take care of him," she gasped. "His name is Siegfried. He comes from a race of heroes."

"How am I to know that he is of hero born?" asked the dwarf bluntly.

"Here, here!" she answered eagerly, drawing some fragments of a sword from the folds of her dress. "It was his father's sword—the wonderful Sword of Need. Keep it safe for him and he shall do—mighty—deeds—"

Her voice trailed into silence, and the dwarf bending down perceived that she was dead.

It was poor Sieglinde who had hid away from the wrath of Wotan, as Brunhilde had bidden her. At last her sad life was ended, and perchance her spirit found peace with that of Siegmund in some happier clime.

Mime now turned his attention to the little child for the first time. He saw that its limbs were sturdily knit, and that already it held its head erect and looked one squarely in the eye—which was more than the dwarf had ever done in his whole life.

"Who knows?" muttered Mime. "This may be the hero for whom I have been waiting. I will bring him up as my son, and train him to my set purpose. At any rate he could soon be useful blowing the fire."

So he adopted the little Siegfried and cared for him, during his helpless days, in a dwarf's rude way. He hollowed out a log for the baby's cradle, and spread a bearskin over it. He gave him goat's milk to drink, and let him play with the broken handles of swords. Every fair morning he carried him out into the bright sunshine and left him to kick his heels and shout back answers to the singing birds. But the dwarf himself rarely ventured outdoors. He seemed to prefer the soot and smoke of his forge-fire. He hammered away, and hummed a moody tune, and took comfort in thinking of the day when this foster-child should be sent to slay the dragon.

But if Mime had expected the lad to mend the fires and work in the shop, he soon found himself mistaken. The little fellow thrived wonderfully and took to the life of the forest naturally. On the

other hand, he had no use for the forge or, it must be confessed, for his foster-father. He soon came to despise the dwarf as a coward, for he himself showed no fear of anything. So he roamed every day in the forest returning only at nightfall with some animal he had slain. Once he harnessed a wild bear with ropes and drove it into the blacksmith's shop, nearly causing Mime to fly out of his wits from terror.

When Siegfried arrived at young manhood he was a goodly sight to look upon. His limbs were strong and powerful, yet rounded and graceful. His skin was tinged with the ruddy hue of outdoor life. His fair hair fell in soft curls to his shoulders, as the manner then was; and his blue eyes met one's look frankly and fearlessly.

Though he had been taught to look upon Mime as his father, Siegfried soon rejected this belief with scorn. He felt no love for the dwarf, such as a son would feel; and he could not help contrasting his own powerful frame and courage with the smith's weak, cringing way. The only tie which now bound them together was a promise made by the dwarf that he would forge a sword with which Siegfried could win every battle. The young man waited impatiently for this sword to be made; and Mime actually worked early and late to finish it. But alas! no sooner would he temper a blade so

that it seemed perfect, when Siegfried would return from the chase and say,

"Ho! *this* is the sword you have made for me to-day!"

And he would shiver it to bits upon the anvil.

This went on day after day, until Siegfried lost all patience and began to threaten the dwarf.

"Hark you, Mime!" he cried. "Give me the stout blade you promised, or it will not go well with you to-morrow night."

"You would not harm your father!" whined the dwarf. "Remember how I have cared for you and sheltered you."

"I have long since paid that score in meat and skins," answered Siegfried. "And as for you being my father, you know that is false. Answer me directly! I would know who my father was!"

His manner was so threatening that the dwarf was thoroughly frightened.

"I—I—do not know who your father was," he stammered; "your mother was Sieglinde, a poor woman whom I sheltered here when you were a baby. She gave me an old broken sword. See, here it is!"

And he rummaged beneath a pile of skins and brought to light the pieces of the magic Sword of Need.

"Ha! that is good metal!" cried Siegfried, as he

examined it. "I will have no sword but this. See to it that 'tis mended for me 'gainst another night."

The smith promised, though in a quaking voice, for he was by no means certain that he could mend the weapon. His fears were well founded. When he tried to do so, the next day, the pieces refused to unite in his hands. After making repeated attempts he sank down behind the anvil in despair.

At this moment a strange-looking man entered the doorway. He was tall and powerful. He wore a long dark cloak, and carried a spear instead of a staff. On his head was a large hat whose broad brim shaded one eye that was evidently injured or missing.

"The Wanderer!" muttered the dwarf in abject fear.

It was indeed Wotan the Wanderer.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded in a voice of thunder, pointing to the broken blade.

"I—I am trying to mend the—the Sword of Need," said the dwarf. He knew there was no use in telling an untruth, as Wotan had already recognised the weapon.

"Where did you get it?" Wotan asked.

" 'Twas given me by Sieglinde the mother of Siegfried. Mercy, mercy! I cannot mend it!"

"Peace, fool! You speak truth. No one but the hero who knows no fear can weld those pieces together!"

So saying he struck his spear upon the floor with a noise like thunder and turning strode away into the forest.

Mime dared not look after him or ask any questions. Indeed, he was in such utter terror that he did not venture from behind the anvil, where he lay hid all day. And here it was that Siegfried found him when he returned home.

"Mime, have you got my sword done yet?" he called.

"Pardon! pardon!" whined the dwarf. "Oh, I have had such an awful scare!"

"A scare? What is that?" asked Siegfried.

"I mean, I have been in dreadful fear," answered Mime.

"Fear? What is that?" asked Siegfried.

"Know you not what fear is?" said Mime, starting up and remembering Wotan's words that only the hero who knew no fear could mend the sword.

The young man shook his head.

Mime pressed the subject further. "Suppose you should meet a great monster in the forest," he said; "a huge dragon whose eyes and mouth shot fire, whose tail lashed this way and that, tearing down the trees, whose tongue was sharp as a sword, and whose terrible fangs could crush you like an insect. Suppose this terrible dragon should come rushing down to devour you. How would you feel?"

"There is no such beast as that," replied Siegfried, smiling.

"Oh, but there is!" urged the dwarf, his own eyes growing big with alarm as he thought of Fafner. "There is! Down in the depths of this very forest lurks a dragon ten times more dreadful than I have said. He lies crouched in a thicket before a cave, and even the gods are afraid to come near him."

"Then he would be worth fighting!" exclaimed Siegfried with flashing eyes. "Forge me this sword as you promised, and then show me the way to his lair!"

"I cannot mend the blade," confessed Mime sullenly. "Only he who has no fear in his heart can mend it or wield it."

Siegfried glanced at him a moment in anger; then as if despairing of getting the dwarf to do the work, he seized the fragments with one hand and the bellows with the other.

"Stand aside!" he commanded. "I will mend the blade."

And he set to work while the dwarf looked on in wonder.

First Siegfried took a file and began rubbing the steel into fine powder.

"Stop!" screamed the dwarf. "You are ruining it."

"Oh, no, I am not," laughed Siegfried, filing the faster.

Soon the sword, all but the handle, was changed into powder. Then Siegfried placed the powder over the fire and blew a bright blaze underneath it. And as he worked the bellows he sang from pure joy in his work,

"Hoho! hoho!
Hahei! hahei!
Bellows blow
The blaze on high!
Deep in the wood
There lived a tree.
Its ashes here
In the flames I see.

Hoho! hoho!
Hahei! hahei!
Bellows blow:
The tree must die!
But the flashing fire
Hath won its way;
It sputters and flares
In the metal's spray.

Hoho! hoho!
Hahei! hahei!
Bellows blow
The flame on high!
The Sword of Need
Will soon be made
And then aloft
I shall flash my blade!"

When he finished the song the powder had become a molten mass. He ran this into a mould and plunged it into the water. The loud hiss of cooling metal was heard. Presently he seized the new blade with a pair of pincers and heated it red hot. Allowing it to remain but a moment in the coals, he placed it upon the anvil and beat it mighty blows till the blade was sharp and thin. Then heating it once again he fastened it to the handle.

He swung the weapon critically and tested its temper. Again he heated it, and beat it till the shop was filled with flying sparks. But now it emerged bright and keen—the most perfect blade in all the world. Triumphantly he sang,

"Ah, Sword of Need!
Anew thou art wrought;
Back unto life and strength
Thou art brought!"

"See, Mime! *This* is the sword I wished you to forge!"

And making the sword whistle about his head he brought it down squarely upon the anvil. From top to bottom the heavy anvil was cleaved, falling into two pieces with a thundering noise.

"Farewell!" cried Siegfried; "the smithy sees me no more from this day. I go to seek the dragon!" And he hurried forth with his wonderful new sword into the forest.

"Wait a moment!" called Mime, running after him; "you cannot find the cave unless I show you the way."

"I thought you were too great a coward for that," laughed Siegfried.

"Who's afraid?" panted the dwarf as he caught up with him. "Besides I am only going to point out the place. *You* are the one that's going to be eaten!"

In fact Mime was quite anxious to have the young man meet the dragon. No matter how the fight turned out, he reasoned that he himself would be the gainer. In the event of Siegfried killing the beast and escaping unharmed, Mime intended to give him a poisonous draught which he had prepared. Then with both these foes out of the way, the dwarf believed that the wonderful Gold of the curse would be his without any further struggle.

But in this Mime was wrong, for his brother Alberich, who had first stolen the Gold from the Rhine-maidens, was even then watching the dragon's cave and had been on guard there night and day. Wotan the Wanderer found him there upon this day of fate, and unheeding the dwarf's taunts and reproaches told him of Siegfried's and Mime's approach. Alberich now hid behind some rocks to watch what should happen.

"See, that is the cave," said Mime, pointing it

out to Siegfried when they were still some distance away. "I can go no farther, as I am very tired from running to catch up with you. But go straight ahead, and I wish you success—and the dragon an equal amount!" The last words he muttered to himself, then scurried for a safe place where he could watch the fight.

It was a beautiful morning, and the birds were carolling sweetly in the tree-tops. Siegfried cast himself down upon the sward to rest himself and enjoy the quiet sylvan scene a little while. The birds seemed to be talking to him. He could not understand their sweet language, but he tried to imitate it upon a reed whistle. Failing in his attempt he seized the horn which was slung around his shoulders and blew a loud clear note as a challenge to the dragon. At once a tremendous crashing sound was heard in a near-by thicket.

"Ah! that must be the dragon!" said Siegfried, craning his neck without getting up.

Again he heard the roar, followed by a terrible snorting and hissing and yawning, and out came a huge lizard-like serpent plunging through the underbrush toward him.

"Who are you?" it growled.

"Oh, you can talk, can you?" said Siegfried. "I am a man who has been sent to you to learn what fear is."

"You will find out if you live long enough!" roared the dragon, showing its fangs and licking out a long forked tongue. "I will devour you in two mouthfuls."

"Oh, no!" laughed Siegfried. "I object. But if you do not teach me what fear is, it will be the worse for you!"

This taunt angered the dragon, as Siegfried intended. It sprang forward, lashed about with its tail and poured forth flame and smoke from its nostrils. Siegfried leaped easily to one side and evaded both dangers. The dragon turned upon him at close range and struck again with its tail. Siegfried vaulted high in the air, so that the tail swept the ground smoothly under him without touching. Quick as a flash he smote the scaly back with his keen sword, so that the black blood poured forth in torrents. The dragon uttered loud bellows of rage and pain, and reared upon Siegfried with the forepart of its body in order to crush him; but as it reared, its breast was exposed, and Siegfried was swift to seize his advantage. With a powerful blow he drove the Sword of Need up to the hilt in the monster's heart.

"Woe is me!" gasped the dragon, rolling upon the earth in a dying condition. "Reckless youth, do you know what you have done?"

"I know I have slain a foul beast because he would not teach me fear."

"Ah, I perceive you are the tool of others," said the dragon in a weak voice. "Know then that I am Fafner, the last of the giants' race. I guarded the Rhine-Gold; but beware of it! a curse follows all who possess it! Beware!"

Then with a dreadful groan the dragon expired.

Siegfried drew his sword from its breast, and as he did so a drop of blood fell upon his hand. It burned like a coal of fire, and instinctively he licked it with his tongue to stop the pain. Suddenly a strange new power came upon him. He new not what it was, but stood silent and amazed waiting to discover what it could be. Then in the silence a bird sang to him from a linden-tree—the same song he had heard before; but this time he could understand it! It was as though the bird were speaking his own tongue!

"The Rhine-Gold is now yours," it sang. "There in the cave you will find it. Be careful to take also the helmet of darkness and the Ring of Power."

Siegfried thanked the friendly bird, and hastened into the cave. While he was gone, Mime and Alberich crept up and for the first time became aware of each other's presence. A violent quarrel at once began as to which should claim the treasure, but it was speedily silenced by the return of Siegfried clad in shining armour and bearing the helmet and

Ring. The two dwarfs slunk away again unperceived by the young man, who walked thoughtfully along listening to the wood-bird, which had recommenced its song. And these were the words of the song:

"Ha! Siegfried now holds
Both the helmet and the Ring;
Beware of sly Mime—
Trust him not in anything!"

Siegfried again thanked the bird for its warning, which was indeed timely; for Mime now approached him with great pretended delight in his safety.

"Have you learned what fear is?" he asked with a grin.

"No, I have not," answered Siegfried.

"Then sit you down and rest, bravest of men!" said the dwarf. "And see, here is a cooling cup of mead I have brought for you. It will quiet you and cause you to forget your weariness."

"It is poison," retorted the young man. "Thanks to the dragon's blood, I can read all your wicked heart! Wretch, take your just deserts!"

With that he dashed the poison cup to the ground, and stretched the dwarf, with one blow, dead at his feet.

"It was his life or mine at the last," he said, as he wended his way thoughtfully into the forest. In spite of his victory over the dragon, he was not

elated. Instead, he was thinking how barren his life had been without friends or kindred, and how aimless it seemed even now, despite the Gold. Sighing heavily he sat down upon a log and buried his face in his hands.

"Lonely, lonely! Of all men I am most lonely!" he cried.

"Would you find a love to comfort you?" sang the clear voice of the bird over his head. "I know where you might find the fairest lady in all the world.

"On a lofty crag she sleeps,
Her guard is a flaming fire;
And he must bravely pierce the blaze
Who would win his heart's desire."

Siegfried sprang to his feet. "This quest is to my liking! Tell me more about it!" he exclaimed.

"The bride to win,
Brunhilde to wake,
Is no coward's task,
Or whom fear doth shake."

Thus sang the wood-bird again, and Siegfried listened to him joyfully.

"Show me the way to the lofty crag, I pray you, good bird!" he exclaimed. "Show me the way, that I may greet the lady or look into the face of fear!"

By way of answer the little bird fluttered away

toward the heights leading up the mountain-side. Siegfried eagerly followed, over stones, through thickets, beneath huge trees, across dangerous chasms, but always being careful not to lose sight of the bird.

At last they came to a wild rocky gorge, extending to the last line of cliffs, and there the bird suddenly disappeared. But Siegfried saw a narrow chasm like a giant's pathway leading upward to the crest, and this, he decided, was the route he must follow. After a last look to see where the bird had gone, he prepared to ascend the path, when he came face to face with Wotan.

Siegfried had never seen the god before, and now was in nowise dismayed, although the strange-looking figure in long cloak and broad hat was larger and more commanding than any he had ever met before this day. In Wotan's hand was the Spear of Authority, with which he ruled the world.

"Where are you going?" asked the god.

"I know not," replied Siegfried. "A little bird told me of a rock surrounded by fire, and a lovely maiden who sleeps there. But now the bird is gone, and I must find my way alone."

"Do you not fear the fire?"

"Fear? That also have I come to seek. Know you the way?"

"It lies up through yonder rift," replied Wotan,

wishing to test the young man's bravery yet further; "but the journey is one of terror. Upon the mountain-top the flames leap fiercely. Sheets of fire driven before the wind rage on every side."

"The fiery foe I challenge!" answered Siegfried. "I must rescue Brunhilde at any cost." And he strode toward the rocky chasm.

"Back, rash youth!" commanded Wotan, stretching out his Spear. "You shall not pass while this all-powerful weapon prevents!"

"It shall not avail against this magic blade!" replied Siegfried, drawing the Sword of Need.

Wotan started at sight of the fateful blade.

"Where got you the weapon?" he asked.

"At Mime's forge I made it—the best metal in the world!"

"But it shall not avail against the Spear, for by it was the Sword first broken," answered Wotan.

"Ah!" cried Siegfried, rushing forward. "Then *you* were my father's foe! On guard, before my Sword brings vengeance upon you!"

He swung the Sword with terrific force through the air. It met the Spear with a crash like thunder, and the once powerful Spear was broken. The owner of the Ring was indeed master of the world!

"Go forward!" said Wotan sadly. "No longer can I hold you. The doom of the gods was foretold before you came into the world. You are but the instrument of fate."

And he disappeared.

Siegfried glanced at the spot where he had stood, in astonishment. Then seeing no further bar to his progress, he ran lightly up the rough pathway. Presently he heard a dull roaring sound and saw, on the mountain height, a huge mass of flames which leaped in every direction and seemed to touch the very sky. Red and wrathful they shone, shutting off the pathway by what appeared to be a solid body of fire, while clouds of smoke hid the view on every side.

But Siegfried pressed forward undaunted. Putting his hunting-horn to his lips he sounded a merry note as if in challenge. And as he went on, a wonderful thing happened. The fire parted slightly to right and left, letting him pass by unharmed. On he went until he came to the inner circle which the flame had guarded; and now it vanished utterly, leaving the blue sky and the free air of heaven.

On the moss-covered rock Siegfried saw some one lying asleep, beneath a heavy shield. He lifted this and beheld what appeared to be a youth clad in bright armour. The helmet hid the face, but when he carefully removed the heavy head-dress a mass of beautiful golden hair was loosened. The features were those of the lovely Brunhilde.

"Ah! it is not a man!" exclaimed Siegfried, gazing at the face in rapture. "It is the maid I have

come to seek! How still she is! How can I waken her from this slumber?"

He tried gently to rouse her by calling, but there was no response. Only her deep breathing told him that she was alive.

" 'Tis the fairest vision I could ever have dreamed of seeing!" he murmured; "the one maid I could worship and serve! Now I cannot waken her, and all my past hardships have been in vain."

He knelt down and gazed long and rapturously into her face. Then unable to restrain his emotions any longer he bent and pressed his lips full and fervently upon hers.

Instantly the maid awoke. While Siegfried started back in rapture she sat up as easily as though yesterday had witnessed the beginning of her long sleep. She gazed about her in delight, and burst forth into a little cry of gladness:

"Hail to thee, Sun,
Hail to thee, Light,
Hail, thou luminous Day!
Deep was my sleep,
Long was the night!"

Then looking about she asked, "Who is the hero that has come to waken me?"

"I am Siegfried," he replied modestly.

"Siegfried, son of Sieglinde?" she cried. "Then I knew your mother in those past years before I fell asleep!"

"Oh, tell me of her and of my father!" he exclaimed, his eyes shining. "But, I am not thoughtful," he added in another tone. "You are in need of refreshment after your long slumber."

"I am a daughter of the gods," she answered, "and feel no faintness or weariness as mortals do."

Siegfried, who had come near to her, drew back as though struck by a blow.

"A daughter of the gods!" he exclaimed. "I—I hoped to claim you for my bride!"

In his ingenuous youth, his inner thoughts rose naturally to his lips.

Brunhilde smiled sadly and shook her head.

"See yonder horse, which also has been asleep?" she asked. "It is Grani, my winged steed, upon which I used to ride through the clouds with my sisters. Would you bid me stay upon earth?"

"Ah, Brunhilde, my love is selfish, I know! But if your heart could feel half the fire that burns in mine, you would gladly stay upon earth like other women!"

"Like other women!" the words brought back the decree of Wotan in a flash, and Brunhilde sat as though stunned. Then she looked proudly at the fearless hero with his frank face and deep blue eyes; and as she looked the love-light shining in his face was lit upon her own.

Siegfried knelt and pressed his lips to her hands,

with bowed head. He dared not look again for very joy, and afraid lest the light he had seen should be vanished.

"Brunhilde! Brunhilde!" he whispered. "Can it be true?"

For answer Brunhilde clasped her arms around his neck and looked up laughingly into the sky. And again she sang—this time a note of glad renunciation. The proud War Maiden, the daughter of the gods, had found a joy in the mortal life of a loving woman, such as she had never dreamed.

"Away, Walhalla!
Glorious world!
Farewell thou gorgeous
Realm of the gods!
End in delight
O lofty race!
Night of destruction
Thy terrors are gone;
I stand in the glow
Of Siegfried's star!"

Then Siegfried in his turn sang of love and Brunhilde. And the two sweet voices blended together at the last in a triumphant strain,

"My own for ever,
And parting never,
For aye and ever.
Shining in Love!
And smiling at Death!"

PART IV

THE DOWNFALL OF THE GODS

WHEN Brunhilde promised to become Siegfried's wife she well knew what it would cost her. She would no longer be of the family of the gods, nor would she have strength and wisdom beyond other mortal women. Yet she now had no regrets. Her love for her hero eclipsed every other thing, and she knew only that she was entirely happy in the present.

Long the lovers sat and talked, forgetful of all the outside world. Siegfried told Brunhilde of his adventures; his fight with the dragon; his possession of the Ring; and finally his encounter with the mysterious stranger whose spear he had shattered.

Brunhilde started up at this. She had recognised Wotan at once from the description.

"The spear was *broken,* you say?" she exclaimed questioningly. "Are you sure it was broken?"

"It fell shivered upon the ground beneath my sword."

"What did the stranger do?"

"He looked sadly at me, saying that he was pow-

erless to hinder me further. Then he vanished suddenly."

"Ah, woe to the gods!" cried the maiden. "Their doom is indeed coming upon them! Siegfried, the spear you broke was the dread Spear of Authority with which great Wotan ruled the world. Now, all the old order of things shall pass away. Walhalla itself must fall, because of the curse of the Ring."

"The curse of the Ring?" asked Siegfried in an astonished voice. "What is that?"

"It is the sad fate which has followed upon the heels of a bad deed," she answered. "King Wotan himself told me the tale upon that day so long ago when I disobeyed him." She shuddered slightly at the memory, then went on: "It is bound up in your own fate, so I will tell you also the story."

Then Siegfried listened with wide-open eyes while Brunhilde told him of the lost Rhine-Gold; the building of Walhalla; the reward of the giants; and the curse of the Ring. His breath was bated and his eyes were very moist when she told further of Siegmund and Sieglinde and the wrath of Wotan.

"Then *you* were the protector of my father and mother!" he said, embracing her joyfully. "Ah, how much love and devotion do I owe you, fairest and dearest of goddess-maidens!"

"Will you never forget me?" she asked.

By way of reply he drew the magic Ring from his finger and placed it upon hers.

"Let this be our troth," he said. "From this moment it becomes a blessing instead of a curse, and our lives shall be one life for evermore."

"It shall tell me always of you," answered Brunhilde. "For I know you cannot linger here, dearly as I should desire it. You come of a race of heroes, and great deeds await you upon earth. Your sword must not grow rusty in idleness, nor your strength weak through ease."

"'Tis true," he said, with a sad but resolute look in his blue eyes, as he glanced far over the nestling valleys. "'Tis true that my lifework is yet to be begun. But, alas! Brunhilde, how can I leave you? You are the only person I have ever known that gave me sympathy or love."

Brunhilde pressed his hands tenderly.

"My sympathy and love shall *always* be for you!" she whispered; "and here shall I wait your return to me. Loki will build his barrier of fire about me once more, and only you, the hero who knows no fear, can find your way back again.

"And now take with you Grani, my good horse. He can no longer fly through the clouds as formerly, when his mistress was one of the immortals. But he will go through fire and water for you, and will be your devoted slave."

The maiden called the beautiful horse, which had been aroused out of sleep at the same time she was awakened, and which was now grazing near by. Grani came to them whinnying gently. Siegfried patted the steed's soft nose, then took the bridle slowly, as if unwilling to speak. He girded on his sword, placed his helmet firmly upon his head, and slung his bugle around his shoulders.

"Farewell, beloved!" said Brunhilde softly.

"Farewell, beloved!" he answered. "My hunting-horn shall tell you from the valley all that I cannot say."

One lingering embrace, and he turned and led his steed down the steep path. Brunhilde watched his descent with shining eyes. Presently from the valley below she heard the mellow notes of the horn sweet and clear. Then the faint gallop of hoofs told her that Siegfried had gone forth into the world to play the part Fate gave him.

Several days passed by. Grani steadily and swiftly bore his rider over mountains, through valleys, and across rivers with untiring zeal. It was not until they reached the noble river Rhine that Siegfried drew rein. Upon the crest of a hill, across the stream from where they stood, rose a splendid castle. It seemed to belong to the king of the country, for it was very large, and a pennant

floated from an upper turret. The current of the river was deep and swift at this point, but a small boat was moored not far from Siegfried.

"Come, Grani!" he said, dismounting; "I will take the boat, while you swim beside me across the stream. This promises an adventure!"

Grani obeyed, and they were soon in the channel, heading toward the castle.

Now this castle was the seat of a king of an ancient and warlike tribe. His name was Gunther, and he tried to deal fairly with every man. He had a beautiful sister Gudrun; and, also, a half-brother named Hagen, a sly fellow who was always plotting mischief. Hagen, in fact, was the evil genius of the castle. You will not wonder at this when I tell you that he was of kin to the Nibelungs, Alberich and Mime.

Like all of dwarf blood, Hagen had a passion for gold, and was also adept at discovering secrets. He knew of the stolen Rhine-Gold; and he had also learned—perhaps through Alberich—of Siegfried's quest of Brunhilde. Thereupon he began to plot, and he told King Gunther just enough of his plotting to get the monarch's interest aroused.

On this very day when Siegfried had started across the river toward the castle, Hagen had been telling the King that he ought to find a queen. And then he told of the beauty of Brunhilde, and

how she slept upon a lofty cliff surrounded by a barrier of fire.

"None but the bravest of heroes can rescue her," Hagen continued. "But there is one who is even now upon this quest. He is called the bravest of the brave, and his name is Siegfried."

Then turning to the Princess Gudrun, he added slyly, "Perchance Siegfried is the hero *you* have been awaiting, O Princess! He is handsome as he is brave."

Now Gunther liked not the idea of another man being braver than he. But he only said, "I should like much to see the fair Brunhilde; but if I could not pierce the flame, how could I persuade Siegfried to do so in my stead, seeing this is his own quest?"

"Leave that to me," laughed Hagen. "I would brew him a drink that would make him forget all his past—his plans and wishes—and he would love the first lady his eyes fell upon."

He looked again slyly at Gudrun, who blushed red, but wished within her heart that she could see this Siegfried. Her wish was soon to be gratified, for just as Hagen finished speaking they heard the sound of a horn, out on the river, blown in challenge.

"Who dares challenge Gunther in his own castle?" exclaimed the King, starting up.

Hagen hurried to the battlements.

"I see a knight clad in glittering gold armour," he said. "He is in a boat alone; and by the boat swims a horse. With your favour I will meet him at the landing." And Hagen seized sword and helmet and hastened out.

King Gunther followed him, his curiosity being aroused by the challenge and Hagen's description. Together in silence they awaited the coming of the boat which made swift progress against the current, driven by Siegfried's muscular arms. Soon it touched the bank, and the young man sprang out. Drawing his sword he saluted the two and then placed himself on guard.

"I am Siegfried," he said simply, "and if any man gainsay my landing on these shores, I am ready to meet him in honourable combat!"

"Not so!" said Gunther, stretching out his hand cordially. "If your name be Siegfried, then am I right glad to welcome you! Much have I heard of your prowess, and more would I fain hear while you rest yourself at my board. I am Gunther."

Siegfried looked him frankly in the eye, then gripped his hand. Hagen also exchanged greetings with him and led Grani away to the stables. Hagen was overjoyed at the turn affairs had taken. With his swift cunning he lost no time in putting his own schemes into play; and before he joined the

King and his guest he found time to brew the drink of forgetfulness, about which he had told the King only a few minutes previously.

Returning to the hall, Hagen found the King and his guest breaking bread together and chatting in a friendly way. Gunther with true hospitality had thrown open his home and realm to the hero. Siegfried on his part offered to serve the King with his sword and steed when any need should arise.

"But how did you know of me, or even that I am Siegfried?" he asked bluntly.

"We have already heard great things of your prowess," replied Hagen, joining in the talk; "and the magic helmet would betray you, else."

"The magic helmet?" repeated the young man.

"Yes, the cap of darkness you have at your belt. Have you never tried its wonderful properties? By its aid you can assume any shape you choose."

Siegfried had never heard of the helmet's power before. He did not attempt to conceal his surprise, but said nothing.

Just then the beautiful Princess Gudrun entered the room. She bore a golden salver, upon which stood a goblet. She had already beheld the hero secretly, and now willingly brought him the fatal cup of forgetfulness which Hagen had made.

"Welcome to the palace of King Gunther!" she said with downcast eyes. "Will my lord Siegfried drink a refreshing brew?"

Siegfried thanked her courteously and placed the goblet to his lips. But though he bowed to her and the King, the toast which he whispered to himself was, "To the health of my Brunhilde! May her memory never grow dim!"

But alas! no sooner had he swallowed the potion than all his past life was blotted out! He seemed like one awakened from a heavy slumber, for he rubbed his eyes and glanced wildly about him.

"Where am I?" he asked, leaning upon a chair for support. "What has happened?"

Then his glance fell upon Gudrun who stood silent and ashamed of what she had done. As he looked, a flame of love was kindled in his heart for her, by the power of the magic draught.

"Who is this fair creature?" he asked, turning to the King. "Is she your wife?"

"She is my sister," answered Gunther. "I have no wife."

"It is not well for man to live alone; and all the more if he be king."

"That is what my brother Hagen has told me. But the one woman I could wish to win, methinks, is not attainable."

"How so?" asked Siegfried.

"She is hedged about by a barrier of fire."

"A barrier of fire?" said Siegfried slowly, and rubbing his eyes again. "A barrier of fire?"

"She can only be reached by one who is brave enough to force his way through the flame," continued Gunther; "by one who knows no fear."

"One who knows no fear?" again repeated Siegfried. "I knew such a man once." But he shook his head sadly and gave up trying to think.

"Yes," added the King, "he who knows no fear can alone win Brunhilde for his bride."

Siegfried made no immediate reply. The potion had done its full work, and he had utterly forgotten Brunhilde. Presently he said:

"I know not the maid of whom you speak. But methinks she could not be as fair as your sweet sister."

Gudrun ran hastily from the room at this.

"I would be willing to go far to win *her* favour," he continued with the frankness of youth.

"Would you be willing to aid King Gunther's wooing?" asked Hagen.

"Right gladly," answered Siegfried. "But how?"

"Your magic helmet would give you his appearance," replied Hagen; "that is, if you would dare face the barrier of fire."

Siegfried's eyes flashed. *"Dare?* I dare anything, if only King Gunther and his fair sister give me their regard!"

The King sprang to his feet quickly.

"Spoken like a man and a brother!" he exclaimed. "Upon my soul, I love you! And if you will obtain Brunhilde for me, I shall undertake to win Gudrun for you."

"Done!" said Siegfried, grasping his hand. "I shall go with you when you wish."

Then the King ordered wine to be poured.

"Come, drink a pledge with me!" he said. "From this day we are brothers. And on the morrow we will set forth."

Together they drank the pledge and vowed vows of eternal friendship.

Meanwhile Brunhilde had grown very lonely. Although she had urged Siegfried to go out into the world and win greater fame, her heart still cried for him, and she wondered, as the days crept by, when he would return. She no longer thought of Walhalla, or the War Maidens. Her whole thought was of Siegfried the fearless.

One day as she sat and brooded, she heard the long-silent cry of the War Maidens, "Hoyo-to-ho!" and looked up in astonishment to see one of her sisters come flying on her steed through the clouds. The next instant the two maidens were sobbing upon each other's necks in the joy of reunion.

"How came you to brave Wotan's displeasure?" exclaimed Brunhilde. "Do you not know that I

am cut off from you, and that you incur a great danger in coming thus to me?"

"Wotan no longer cares," answered her sister. "Since his Spear of Authority was broken he sits in Walhalla with moody brow. And, O my sister! that is why I have come to you! I heard him say that if you but gave up the Ring of the Rhine-maidens, of your own accord, the curse would be removed, and the home of the gods saved."

"But I cannot give it up!" exclaimed Brunhilde, wildly pressing the Ring to her heart. "It is my betrothal ring from Siegfried, and I have promised to guard it always!"

"That is the only way Walhalla can be saved! Surely you can do that little thing!" her sister entreated.

"What care I for Walhalla?" said Brunhilde, stormily. "I have so long been denied its halls that I have ceased to care. The love of Siegfried is the dearest thing I have in the world. Wotan cannot take that away from me. Go back and tell him so!"

"Then woe must come upon us all!" cried her sister; and seeing further entreaty was useless, she sprang hastily upon her steed and rode away.

Brunhilde made no effort to stay her, but fell again into brooding silence. Presently, however, she heard the sound of a horn and sprang eagerly

to her feet. It was Siegfried's horn and he was returning! She rushed to the edge of the rock. The flames which had been burning fiercely parted to right and left, as once before, and the form of a man appeared. It was indeed Siegfried, but she did not recognise him. He had put the magic helmet upon his head and taken the form of Gunther. With Gunther's voice he also spoke to her.

In a tremble she asked, "Who has dared come where only the fearless hero finds a way?"

"I am Gunther the King," he answered, "and have come to claim you as my bride."

"That cannot be," she answered. "I am Siegfried's promised wife."

"Siegfried? You are mad! He is promised to another. Come with me."

"Away! It is not true!" she cried. "This is his Ring, and in its name I tell you to begone!"

She waved it threateningly, but he stepped forward.

"If that is his Ring, I must take it," he said. And before she could avoid him he seized her hand and removed the golden hoop from her finger.

"Come with me!" he commanded. "In the name of this bauble, I tell you to obey."

He had said the words in imitation of her manner, and not at all expecting her to yield so easily, for the power of the Ring also had gone from his

memory. But what was his amazement to see her come forward meekly and prepare to go with him. Only as she left the rock, she turned her eyes toward the sky, and moaned.

"Ah, Wotan! I see thy hand in this! Forgive me for having defied thee!"

Siegfried could make nothing of this outcry; but delighted that he should succeed in his wooing for Gunther so easily, he led her down the mountain-side and bade her rest a moment by a fountain. She did so, when he went swiftly around a rock and disappeared. The real Gunther who had awaited him there now came forward in his stead with horses and bade Brunhilde mount. She sadly obeyed and rode with him toward his castle, while Siegfried dashed swiftly ahead to greet Gudrun and await their coming.

Hagen, meanwhile, had not been idle at the palace. He had seen Alberich and they had plotted together as to the best means to seize the Ring, no matter who should return wearing it. Hagen had also talked with Gudrun and easily persuaded her to accept Siegfried without delay upon his return.

Siegfried, therefore, found a pleasing welcome when he presently arrived; and he had exchanged vows with the Princess before the horns announced that the King was returning with his bride.

Siegfried and Gudrun with Hagen met the royal party at the landing.

"Welcome home, brother!" said Siegfried. "I am overjoyed to see that you have been as successful in your suit as I have been in mine."

Gudrun also had kissed her brother. Brunhilde, however, at sight of Siegfried started back.

"Siegfried! You here? Is it true then that you are plighted to another?"

"I am plighted to Gudrun," he answered calmly.

Brunhilde felt a deathly faintness come over her and came near falling to the ground. Siegfried sprang forward and supported her.

"Ah, Siegfried beloved! do you not remember me?" she asked faintly.

The voice stirred strange chords within him, but he did not understand them. He quietly seated her, then turning, said, "Gunther, your bride is ill." And as the King approached, he added to her, "You have been faint. See, here comes your husband."

As he pointed to the King, Brunhilde saw the fatal Ring gleaming upon Siegfried's finger.

"Ha! the Ring!" she cried. "Siegfried's Ring! My Ring! Where got you it, if you are not my hero himself?"

"She is excited and overcome by her journey," said Siegfried to the others. Then as if talking to

himself he went on, "This Ring? Where did I get it, I wonder? It seems to me that some time, somewhere—I forget just where—I fought a dragon and wrested the Ring from him."

Siegfried knitted his brow and strove to recall the past. Hagen stepped quickly forward.

"This excitement is proving too much for both our brides and bridegrooms," he said gaily. "Come, let us within where a feast is spread in honour of the great day."

The King was swift to see his suggestion.

"Yes, order the trumpets to blow!" he ordered. "We will rest from our journey and have public feastings."

The party entered the castle, Brunhilde with the rest. She had looked once again beseechingly at Siegfried, but all his attention was bestowed upon Gudrun. At last the proud spirit of Brunhilde flashed up at what she deemed an insult. She, a daughter of the gods, to be wooed and then forsaken! She vowed revenge upon Siegfried for his rudeness.

However, she gave no sign of all this. She joined the feast, and sat smilingly at Gunther's side. She became his wife, while still her heart cried out for her hero, and cried in no less measure for revenge!

Hagen alone knew of the struggle that was going

on in Brunhilde's mind. He watched anxiously her every action; and now that he saw her smile and accept King Gunther before them all, he rubbed his hands in glee, under the banquet board. He saw that his evil schemes were succeeding just as he had planned.

And so, after the feast was ended, while all was laughter and music within the hall, Hagen came up and talked to Brunhilde. At first it was only idle talk and hidden flattery; then he touched upon Siegfried.

"Speak not to me of him," said Brunhilde coldly.

"Why not?" asked Hagen in feigned surprise. "He is said to be the bravest hero in the world."

"He may be brave, but I care not to talk of him. He is the falsest man alive."

Some rash impulse made her say these words, and she regretted them as soon as spoken. But Hagen was quick to follow them up.

"You amaze and alarm me!" he said. "I had supposed him to be honourable. If he is false he is a menace to our kingdom, and I for one would wish that he were out of it."

"It would indeed be better if he were gone," said Brunhilde, her pride still making her utter rash things.

"I am glad you have advised me of his true character," said Hagen craftily. "The King purposes

to give a hunting party to-morrow. Now if Siegfried should not return from it, do you think it would be better so?"

"Yes," said Brunhilde indifferently, and turned to speak to the King.

But if she gave no more thought to these fateful words, Hagen fairly hugged them in his heart. He saw in them a license to do evil to Siegfried.

The next day, as he had said, the King gave a hunting party in honour of the two brides. All were to meet at noonday for a repast in a grove, but were at liberty to follow, that morning, wherever the chase might lead.

Siegfried's horse Grani soon outdistanced all the others and led him into a deep wood. There he started a bear, but after pursuing it for some time it disappeared, and Siegfried found himself upon a wild part of the banks of the Rhine. Being thirsty and weary he dismounted, drank at the river's brink and threw himself down upon a mossy knoll.

Just then he heard the sound of singing—a melodious but unearthly strain ending almost in a wail. Looking around, he saw three river nymphs rise out of the water and swim toward him. They were the Rhine-maidens, but Siegfried had never seen them before. However, he was undaunted at the vision, and sought to make a jest at their expense.

"Hail, fair maidens!" he exclaimed. "Some elf has led me astray, so I desire your aid. This elf was in the shape of a bear, and if he was not a friend of yours, I wish you would help me find him."

"What will you give us if we help you?" they asked.

"I have nothing to give until I catch him," replied Siegfried, laughing. "What do you desire?"

One of the maidens swam to him with outstretched hand.

"A golden Ring enwraps your finger," she said. "Give us the Ring and we will help you find the bear."

"I think I slew a huge dragon to win this Ring," replied Siegfried lightly. "That would be a sorry trade for me to barter it for a bear."

"You are selfish," the maidens sang teasingly. "Be wise and give us the Ring!"

They dived in and out of the water and Siegfried laughed to watch them, secretly resolving to throw them the Ring before he left them, for it had no present value in his eyes. But soon the three maidens swam close to the shore and lifted up their arms warningly.

"Beware, Siegfried!" they exclaimed. "The Ring has a curse upon it! Better give it to us!"

"A curse?" he asked. "That makes it interesting! I must hear about this curse."

Then the Rhine-maidens sang,

"Siegfried! Siegfried! Siegfried!
Sorrow dire we foresee:
If thou wardest the Ring,
A curse it will be.
From the Gold of the Rhine
It was craftily wrought,
Then cursed by the dwarf
When its magic he sought.
Whoever shall own it
Is fated to fall;
The dragon thou slewest
Was but one among all.
To-day *thou* art stricken—
Thy doom we divine—
Unless thou returnest
The Ring to the Rhine!"

Siegfried heard the song through, then placed the Ring tightly on his finger.

"Ah, ye are trying to frighten me into giving up the trinket!" he said. "But ye have sung your song to the wrong ears. I know not what fear is and have been hunting it all my life."

"Beware, Siegfried!" the maidens cried entreatingly, sinking once more into the water's depths.

"Farewell!" he called after them laughingly. "I must hasten to join the hunt."

The sound of a far-away horn was now heard, and he answered it with his bugle, then hastily

mounted Grani and rode away. Thanks to his swift steed he soon reached the spot agreed upon for the noontide repast. He greeted the two ladies, the King, Hagen and the retainers, and seated himself between Hagen and Gudrun. Brunhilde sat directly opposite, by the King's side.

As Siegfried had brought no game to the feast, it was jestingly decreed that he should entertain the company by telling some of his past adventures. Hagen passed goblets of wine to each one present, and took the opportunity to pour into Siegfried's cup a few drops of a potion which caused him to remember again some of his past.

So Siegfried began to tell of his early life in the forest with Mime; of how he harnessed the bear to frighten the dwarf; of his Sword of Need and the fight with the dragon.

The company applauded his story and begged him to go on. He gladly did so, for it now seemed new and strange to him also; or as if it had been a dream. Hagen poured more of the potion into his goblet.

"After I slew the dragon," continued Siegfried, "a strange thing happened. I chanced to get a drop of its blood upon my tongue, when I heard a bird singing to me and I understood all it said. It told me of this magic Ring I have on my finger and of the Rhine-Gold in a cave. It also told me of a

maiden on a mountain height surrounded by a barrier of fire. Her name was—Brunhilde!"

He sprang to his feet, rubbed his eyes, and looked across the table.

"Her name was Brunhilde!" he exclaimed again; and then he stretched out his arms.

"Brunhilde, it was *you,* oh, my beloved! Where have you been so long?"

Brunhilde rose hastily as if to reply; but before she could utter a word Siegfried fell backward. Hagen had struck him treacherously from behind with his spear.

"What have you done?" shouted the King, while Gudrun leaned her head swooningly upon her knees.

"I have slain a traitor!" boldly replied Hagen. "Did you not hear him admit that he had sought Brunhilde before he was wed with the Princess Gudrun? And Brunhilde herself ordered his death."

"No, no!" shrieked Brunhilde, rushing to her dying hero's side. "Ah, beloved, I see it all now! The curse of the Ring was upon us and you knew not what you did!"

She lifted his head upon her lap and tried to pour wine down his throat. His eyes, which were already fast glazing, opened again at the touch of her hand.

"Brunhilde!" he whispered. "Where have you been? I—have—sought you—"

"Siegfried! Siegfried! forgive me! It has all been a cruel mistake! Do not die! Ah, beloved, look at me with your dear eyes again! Your kiss awakened me from a slumber of years. See, I kiss you and love you. Why do you not awaken as I did? Do not go away and leave me again! I shall not let you go!"

She pressed her lips wildly upon his, and the kiss stayed his soul yet a moment more.

"Brunhilde—mother—we will—not—part—"

The hero who knew no fear had ended his brief earth battle.

Brunhilde wept bitterly in the first outburst of grief. Then summoning all her pride and resolution, she rose and confronted Hagen.

"This is your evil deed!" she said. "You shall not fasten thoughtless words of mine upon it. There has been conspiracy here, and I fear that ye all are in it."

"There has indeed been conspiracy," the King answered sadly; "but Hagen alone is the doer of this deed, and for it he shall answer. Our conspiracy lay only in giving Siegfried a drink of forgetfulness. We did not know he had become plighted to you; and he himself was made to forget

it by the potion. He served us in all innocence."

Brunhilde looked at Hagen, Gunther, and Gudrun scornfully; then turned to the retainers.

"Take up the body of Siegfried," she commanded, "and bear it to the river's brink. There we will burn it upon a funeral pyre, and there will I consign this Ring of the curse back to the Rhine-maidens."

They placed Siegfried upon his shield and laid the Sword of Need across his breast. Then they bore him as she had commanded to the bank of the river. At sunset a great funeral pyre had been erected, and the body was laid upon it. A torch was applied and as the heap burst into flame, Brunhilde called her steed Grani and mounted him.

"Hoyo-to-ho!" she cried, giving for the last time the call of the War Maidens. "Siegfried, beloved, I come to thee!"

And straight into the fire she rode, and the flames leaping high hid her and her steed from view. But out of the midst of the pyre her voice called to the Rhine-maidens.

"Behold the Ring; the Ring of the curse! Come, seize it, and may gods and men be relieved of its ban!"

At her cry a wondrous thing was seen by the watchers round about the pyre. A great wave rose out of the bed of the river, and on its crest the three

Rhine-maidens appeared. Up over the bank rushed the wave, quenching the fire as it came and sweeping all before it into the water's depths.

Suddenly Hagen gave a fearful cry. He beheld the Ring again being swept from beyond his grasp, and he plunged into the current and attempted to take it from one of the maidens who held it exultingly aloft. But the other two twined their arms about him and dragged him down with them. When the wave had subsided he was no longer to be seen; nor was there any vestige of the funeral pyre or Brunhilde. The curse of the Ring was wiped away.

Just then a reddish glow was seen in the sky. Swiftly it grew and spread like the light of many auroras. In speechless amazement the onlookers beheld this awe-inspiring sight. The doom of the gods had come with the recovery of the Ring. Walhalla was being destroyed. Wotan's kingdom was at an end. Henceforth the world was to press forward to new and better things.

Parsifal the Pure

(*Parsifal*)

YOU have just read of the downfall of the gods through broken promises, and of a great hero of those early days who fell a victim to fate. And now you may like to hear of another hero who was even greater, for he was superior to every enemy and every temptation to the end. The old order of things had long since passed away. The gods were indeed dead, and men believed instead in one true God and in His beloved Son. A beautiful legend had grown out of the last days of the Christ upon earth; and this legend is the golden thread upon which is hung our present story.

You remember that in the Bible account of the Last Supper, Christ took a cup and blessed the wine in it and gave it to His disciples to drink.

"Galahad, as Tennyson portrays him, will always hold the first place with English readers as the ideal Knight of the Holy Grail. The matchless diction of Tennyson has given the less perfect form of the legend a supreme charm and beauty. But Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parsifal,* as spiritualised and humanised in Wagner's lyric drama, will be seen to be in fuller accord with the whole cycle and development of the Grail legends, and at the same time gives the nobler story."—Oliver Huckel.

The legend goes on to relate that Joseph of Arimathea, the man who provided a tomb for Christ, obtained the blessed cup of the sacrament, and that at the crucifixion he caught in it a few drops of blood from Christ's bleeding side.

Henceforth the Cup possessed the magical power of healing all wounds and sicknesses. It brought perfect peace to its possessor; and the mere sight of it was esteemed the greatest privilege on earth. But it was rarely seen of men. Spirited away by divine power, the Holy Grail—as it was called—was shown only on rare occasions and to the noblest and most self-sacrificing among its seekers. And so its quest came to be the highest task a man could set himself, for it meant the conquering of his own baser nature first of all, and the putting aside of every selfish interest.

You may have read the fine old story of the quest of King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table for this Holy Grail, and how it made them all nobler and better, although the inspiring vision was granted only to two or three. At that time it had no fixed place, and men did not know where or how to seek it. So it is no wonder that so few ever succeeded in the quest.

Finally in another land a brave knight, Titurel by name, decided to devote his whole life to seeking the sacred Cup. Taking with him his son, and a

small but chosen body of knights, he set forth trusting to the mercy of Heaven to favour his search. Many days he led his little band across deserts, through valleys, and over stony mountain-sides. And as they went they aided every person who crossed their path; they forsook all worldly pride; and they spoke only in kindness and humility of spirit. Night and morning, also, they prayed that they might be led to the Holy Grail.

On and on they went, dusty and travel-worn and weary, but with the same brave hearts. Late one evening they stopped for the night in the shelter of a dense forest. They had travelled all day and had eaten little, but after resting a brief while something seemed to urge them forward.

"Rise, my brave knights," said Titurel, standing stiffly upon his feet. "Rise, and let us go still farther into this wood. I feel that it is the divine will."

Without murmuring they once more resumed their march, and, wonderful to relate, the farther they went the less tired they grew. A strange feeling of rest and content came over them until in a great wave of joy they all fell upon their knees and gave thanks. They felt that at last they were nearing the Holy Grail.

As they knelt a great light, like noonday, shone round about them, and a voice said:

"Arise, ye blessed among mankind! For your labours are rewarded and it is given to you to guard the Holy Grail. Near unto you is a mountain which shall be called Mount Salvat, and thereupon must ye build a temple. And ye shall be called the Knights of the Holy Grail."

The voice ceased. The knights fell upon their faces in prayer and thanksgiving. When they arose the light had disappeared, but in each face was reflected a lofty purpose born of its glory.

The next morning they went their way to Mount Salvat and there built the temple. High were its walls, with lofty arches and beautiful windows, and its fame as the most imposing temple in all the world soon went abroad. And when it was finished and they held the solemn service of dedication, a light came and glowed steadily in the crypt. While all the knights fell upon their knees, Titurel drew near and lifted a veil. There in all its beauty shone the Holy Grail!

Then Titurel and the knights were filled with great joy, and they vowed eternal service to the sacred charge. They became, indeed, a sort of priesthood and forsook all other aims or desires. Daily they worshipped in the temple, and were fed from the holy altar. And if any among them became wounded or ill, the mystic fire which glowed about the Cup speedily restored them to health.

For many years they kept their charge with zealous faith. Titurel their head became an old man, and Amfortas his son was appointed chief guardian of the Grail in his stead.

Meanwhile, as you may suppose, many other knights were desirous of being admitted into the temple; but none save those who led pure and sincere lives were ever accepted. Among those who were rejected because they were unworthy was a powerful magician named Klingsor. When he failed to win entrance in the usual way he tried to bribe the keepers of the gates and to make use of other base methods, but without success.

In his rage, Klingsor swore vengeance and devoted all his wicked arts to overthrowing the Temple of the Grail. He made a beautiful garden on the other side of the mountain, which he filled with flowers, fruits, music and dancing girls. By this means he deluded many knights who had come from afar earnestly seeking the Holy Grail, so that, almost at the goal, they forgot their quest and tarried idly in the gardens.

Hearing of Klingsor's wicked arts, Amfortas was filled with righteous anger. He determined to go forth and strike down the magician with the sacred Spear, which was his high badge of office. This Spear was second only to the Grail itself in value. It was the same that had pierced the

Saviour's side while He was on the cross. It gave to its bearer the power of overcoming all his enemies, so long as he was true to the faith. But Amfortas though zealous was too confident of his own strength. Going over the mountain hastily in search of Klingsor, he grew tired and thirsty; so when he came to a shady grove of fruit-trees by a splashing fountain, he did not recognise this as one of the wiles of the magician, but ate and drank, then threw himself down on the cool grass and fell asleep. The Spear was loosened from his grasp, in his slumber, and he was only awakened by a keen, smarting pain in his side. He found that he had been wounded; and as he sprang to his feet he confronted Klingsor who was waving aloft the Spear in triumph.

"Go back to your temple!" sneered Klingsor; "and bid the next man be not weary so soon!"

In shame and sorrow Amfortas departed, knowing that he had sinned and could do nothing against the Spear now in the hands of the enemy. Earnestly he did penance in the temple and confessed his fault, but the wound in his side never healed. It gave him daily torment, and the sight of the Grail which had once brought healing seemed only to increase the pain.

It had been Amfortas' duty to uncover the Grail each day at sacrament, but so dire was his suffer-

ing that he came to do it less and less frequently. The knights were very sorrowful because of these things, and they sent far and wide for healing balsams, but all remedies were powerless. Long did Amfortas kneel before the altar praying in his pain, and seeking for a word of hope from above. At length one day an added radiance glowed about the Grail, and he heard a voice saying,

"By pity enlightened,
My guileless one,—
Wait thou for him
Till my will is done!"

Amfortas could not understand these words, but somehow his heart was lightened, and he thanked God that one day, be it near or far, he should find relief. The other Knights of the Grail also heard with joy of the strange message, for they did not doubt that it meant healing and peace.

For many days they waited patiently and prayerfully without receiving any further sign. Amfortas strove to sustain his courage, but it was a bitter test. Daily he tried the baths and also the balms which his knights often went to much peril to obtain for him; yet the wound still showed no signs of healing, and deep gloom settled down over the temple.

One day while the aged keeper of the gate was sitting, as was his wont, with his face toward the

little lake which nestled in the valley, his eye was attracted by a wild swan which soared peacefully above the lake. Suddenly it turned sidewise with a wild flutter of pinions and began to fall toward the water. The keeper saw that it was wounded by an arrow, and he hastened down to the lake to see who had done the deed; for it was forbidden to harm any creature, great or small, within sight of the temple.

Just as he reached the bank, the swan fell at his feet and expired, while at the same moment a youth ran up to claim his prize. He was clothed in motley animal skins, but he was strong and well knit, and with that frank look about the eye which denotes both fearlessness and innocence.

"Shame, shame upon you, boy, for shooting the swan!" said the old man sternly.

"Why, what have I done?" answered the youth. "Do not men hunt birds and beasts? Methought it was a fine thing that I struck the bird so high."

"But you are now within holy ground, where 'tis sacrilege to harm any creature. And think what sorrow you have brought with your idle deed. This beautiful bird will soar in the clouds no more. It may have a mate, or perhaps little ones awaiting its coming. They will never see it again."

The boy stood with downcast eyes and troubled face. "Indeed, I never thought evil," he said.

And seized by a sudden impulse he broke his bow across his knee and flung his arrows away.

"What is your name, boy?" asked the knight.

"I am Parsifal," he answered simply.

"Whence come you?"

"I do not know."

"Where go you?"

"I go to become a knight," answered the boy. "I have always wanted to be a knight."

"But do you not know that great things are expected of a knight? They must do other deeds than roaming about shooting harmless swans."

The boy flushed, but looked straight at the stern old man. "I know that a man must be brave and true," he said; "and that he must keep his heart pure. My father, who died long ago, was such a knight, and my mother has always taught me to be like him."

"But you will have many strong trials before you can become a knight. You may have to wander all over the world and endure many hardships."

"I am ready for them," answered the boy sturdily.

"Truly you are a guileless fellow," said the old keeper; "but I like your spirit. Would you like to witness a service in the temple and hear the choir-boys sing? Perchance you would like to be a choir-boy for awhile?"

"Nay, but I came to be a knight. Nathless I will hear the singing."

The boy said this so calmly, that the knight was half sorry he had given the invitation; for chances to obtain entrance to the service were exceedingly rare. However, the word had been spoken and he would abide by it.

They cast the dead swan into the lake and went together up the hill. Service of the sacrament was just being begun in the temple as they entered its doors. High up in the organ loft the rolling waves of music poured forth, filling every arch of the lofty building. Then the sweet voices of boys were heard chanting the refrain to which Amfortas had set music:

"By pity enlightened,
My guileless one,—
Wait thou for him
Till my will is done!"

Parsifal plucked the old knight's sleeve. "What do they mean by that?" he asked.

"Hush. I do not know," replied the knight.

Parsifal thought it strange that they should sing words no one understood, but he kept silence and looked upon the solemn service with wide-open eyes.

The aged Titurel was present at the service. His days were almost numbered now, but he still

had his couch conveyed into the presence of the beloved Grail when he felt strong enough. To-day he joined the other knights in urging his son Amfortas to uncover the Cup and serve the sacrament.

"Let me have the sacrament from out the blessed Cup once more before I die," said Titurel.

Amfortas shook his head and groaned aloud.

"Not yet, my father! I am unworthy to uncover the Grail!"

Nevertheless the feeble Titurel urged the point, and all the knights knelt with solemn upturned faces, until at last Amfortas went and unveiled the Cup and poured wine therefrom, so that all might partake. Then he fell to the floor with a shudder of pain. The old wound had broken open afresh. But Titurel and the other knights partook of the sacrament, while the choir-boys chanted responsively and the deep organ pipes thrilled all the lofty arches.

The old keeper of the gate went forward and partook with the rest, while the boy Parsifal stood spellbound behind a pillar and could make no meaning of what he saw.

At last the keeper came and led him forth again to the open air, and then the lad's tongue was loosed.

"I pray thee, why did the King fall to the floor as if in pain?" he asked.

"The wound in his side pained him," answered the keeper.

"Why doesn't it heal?"

"That is a long story. But the wound was made by the sacred Spear, and 'tis said that only the touch of that Spear again can make it well."

"Then why does he not go and lay hold of the Spear?"

"It is in a powerful magician's hands."

"Can no one take it from him?"

"No one has yet succeeded in the quest," answered the knight. "But, boy, how did you like the service of the Holy Grail?"

"I could make nothing of it," said Parsifal, turning as if to go.

"Could make nothing of it!" exclaimed the old knight. "Truly you would not be much of a choirboy. But where are you going?"

"I go to seek the Spear that will heal the King," answered Parsifal.

The old knight let him go without further words. He even shook his head in some impatience.

"Truly a guileless youth," he said to himself. "A little knocking about in the world will not hurt him. He is too foolish to do us any good here. And as to being a *knight*—pish!"

But just then the closing words of the service came echoing through the windows, and caused the

old man to start. He had heard again the mystic song,

"By pity enlightened,
My guileless one!"

Now Klingsor the magician had cast a spell over a poor woman so that she was obliged to obey him in all things. Usually she was old and wrinkled, and passed for a witch in the countryside. But when Klingsor waved his wand over her she became the most beautiful maiden ever seen. Kundry was her name, and she it was who had charge of the groves and flowers and music and dancing girls which had caused so many knights to turn aside before ever they reached the Temple of the Grail. Kundry, indeed, had caused Amfortas himself to sin, on the day he lost the Sacred Spear.

But when the spell was removed from poor Kundry she always bitterly repented her misdeeds. She had been very sorry for Amfortas, in her wild way, and had herself brought balsam from distant lands to heal his wound, but without avail.

No sooner was Parsifal on his way in search of the sacred Spear, than Klingsor was on the alert. Once more he summoned Kundry and bade her prepare the same kind of a trap for Parsifal as had lured the knights aside. But Kundry hotly protested at this. She had seen the youth and greatly

liked his open face and frankness. She rebelled against doing harm to one so harmless as he.

"Let him pass on his way," she pleaded. "He has done no evil and is too simple to find you unaided, and even if he did, he could not take the Spear from you."

"Do as I bid you!" replied the magician, angrily. "It is precisely because he *is* pure and innocent that I fear him. Such an one's coming has long been foretold."

So Kundry had nothing to do but sadly obey.

When Parsifal drew near, walking over the crest of the hill, the palace of Klingsor suddenly sank into the earth and vanished, leaving in its stead a lovely flower-garden. Presently Parsifal stopped and listened, for he heard strains of music.

"How sweet it sounds!" he said; "yet it seems to make the air heavy and uncomfortable. I wonder where it comes from?"

Louder grew the music, and with it came the sound of girls' voices. Just then he came to the entrance of the garden, where he paused spellbound. The flowers themselves were singing to him! Each flower was in the lovely tints of a rose, lily, pansy or carnation, and out of the centre of each blossom peeped the bright eyes and laughing face of a bewitching maiden.

"Come!" they sang to him; "come and rest by

the fountains! Come, drink nectar, and let us sing to you while you rest in the shade!"

"Nay," said Parsifal, simply. "I like you all, and would gladly listen to your song; but I cannot tarry, for I am on an urgent errand."

"Come!" they pleaded; and the flowers seemed to weave in and out in a wonderful dance, nodding to him and beckoning him. "Come! Only a little while! Then you will start forth rested and make better speed."

Parsifal shook his head. "I cannot enter," he said, and turned to go, when another voice softer than the rest called his name.

"Who called me?" he asked, turning about.

"I called thee, lad," said the sweet voice.

He looked whence it came and saw a leafy bower opened wide, and in it sat a maiden fairer than ever heart could dream. It was Kundry, the ugly old witch, transformed by the power of the magician into this glorious vision.

"How did you know my name?" he asked, bluntly.

"I knew thy mother, lad, and thy father, too. Wouldst hear of them?"

"Yes, yes!" he cried eagerly. "Tell me of them!"

"Then come within the bower and rest awhile. Here thou canst listen to the music and eat and drink and dance with these lovely flowers."

"Nay, but tell me now! Why should I pause when I am not faint? No good deed was ever done by stopping on the way."

"Thou art a foolish youth," said the maiden. "Why art thou in so great haste?"

"I seek a magician," he answered, frankly; "a magician who has stolen the sacred Spear."

"Ah, I can tell thee of him!" she cried—an evil light lurking in her eyes. "Come, sit by my side, and I will tell not only of him but of thy father and mother."

Parsifal turned at this, but entered the garden slowly. He knew no reason why he should not come in, and yet a great force seemed holding him back. "But how can I go on my errand," he thought, "unless I find the way?"

"I would hear about my mother first," he said, seating himself by the maiden's side. "Is she well?"

"She is well, but has mourned sadly since thou didst go away. I saw her only a few days ago, and she sent thee her love and a kiss."

Here the witch leaned forward suddenly and printed a kiss upon his lips. It was intended to enchant him, but for once it failed of its effect. Parsifal sprang up as if stung by an asp.

"Amfortas! O Amfortas!" he cried. "I know it now! The spear-wound in your side! Ah, the anguish of it has come upon me also!"

"Thou art wrong," said the woman softly. "I have harmed thee not. Only stay!"

"Not another moment!" exclaimed Parsifal. "Your garden is evil and brings death to men's souls."

He turned to go, but the witch called aloud to the magician, for she knew her power was gone. And as she called, Parsifal saw a dark, dreadful figure before him that blocked his way.

"Stay!" commanded Klingsor, waving the sacred Spear aloft. "Those who enter my garden cannot leave it so easily!"

"Stand aside!" cried Parsifal. "I have done no hurt, and I fear you not!"

"Thou wilt fear me when thou dost feel this spearpoint! 'Tis the same that undid Amfortas."

"Ha! say you so? Then I have come to claim it in his name."

"Take it!" shouted the magician angrily. And he threw the weapon straight at Parsifal with terrific force.

But miracle of miracles! it stopped of itself midway, and floated gently round about Parsifal's head. He grasped it reverently and made the sign of the cross.

"In this sign, perish!" he exclaimed. "Let all your wicked magic vanish from the face of the earth!"

As he uttered these words a tremendous crash was heard, followed by an earthquake. The garden, its flowers and music and running streams, were swallowed up in an instant, with all its inmates. Parsifal alone remained on solid ground.

He looked about him, but could see only a trackless forest with close spreading trees that shut out the blue sky and the light of the sun. He did not know which way to turn, or where stood the Temple of the Grail. But the sacred spear was still in his hand, and its presence seemed to bring comfort. He knelt and prayed for guidance, and as if in answer, the words of the old knight came into his memory,

"You may have to wander all over the world and endure many hardships."

The young Parsifal wondered at this message. It seemed to come in answer to his prayer, and yet his spirit rose in questioning. "Why should I roam over the world when the King needs me so much, and his wound is not healed?"

But no other answer came, and no path led out of the forest. So he made no further questions but went his way, trusting to Heaven to guide him, and the sacred Spear to protect him. When at last he reached the borders of the wood he found himself in a strange country.

Thus it was that Parsifal began his pilgrimage.

Long and hard it was, yet he did not falter or complain. And always his hand was ready to help the poor or the suffering, while little children came to him gladly knowing they had found a friend.

Often his path led over steep, rough mountains; again it lay in burning sands of the desert; and again it was close to treacherous quicksands or yawning pits. But steadily he pressed forward, learning many things as he went, but never parting from any of his early purity or courage.

Slowly, also, the great truth of the Holy Grail dawned upon him. He heard men speak of it with reverence and longing as the dearest treasure the earth possessed. Then he realised how lightly he had thrown away his own privilege through ignorance and why the old knight at the gate had turned from him with impatience, as "guileless." With humility and prayer he resolved that he would always try to be worthy of this vision, in the hope that it would again come to him. And in moments like this, when his whole soul was stirred with anguish, he seemed to hear an inner voice saying,

"Courage! The Holy Grail is not far away!"

Thus years passed by, and at last Parsifal, for true and heroic service, was made a knight. Never was there a comelier. Strong and straight and graceful he stood, while his face was fair and pleasing and seemed continually to glow with an inner

light. His eye was the very mirror of truth. He was, indeed, the image of that ancient ideal, a knight without fear and without reproach; and always he sought the deed that was most valorous and the duty that was most severe, hoping that his steps might be directed again to the Temple of the Grail.

One night he heard the bleating of a lamb that had lost its way. Parsifal was far from shelter, and the night was stormy, yet he did not hesitate. He turned aside and sought in the darkness until he had found the little wanderer, then he wrapped it in his cloak and carried it to its mother. When he again sought his road he could not find it because of the storm. He wandered on, and presently saw that he was in the midst of a dense forest. Somehow even in the night it seemed familiar to him, and his heart gave a great leap. He felt that the Holy Grail was close at hand!

Then a flash of lightning disclosed to him a little cavern, hollowed out of a rock, and he entered it for shelter during the night, with thankfulness.

The next morning the sun shone bright and warm, gilding the wet leaves of the forest with radiance. Parsifal followed a shining beam of gold straight through the forest—and there before his feet lay the lake where he had shot the swan so long ago. On the hill near by stood the Temple of the Grail.

Parsifal stuck the Spear upright in the soil and knelt in prayer and rejoicing that his long pilgrimage was at an end; then rose and took his steps toward the hill.

"I wonder if the old knight of the gates is still alive," he said to himself; "I should dearly like to see him again."

No sooner had he said this, than he saw an aged man tottering feebly along, and lo! it was the keeper himself. By his side walked a woman whom Parsifal seemed to remember, but could not quite. It was Kundry the former witch of the flower-garden. After this garden was destroyed she had been released from the magician's spell, and she was now carrying water and doing other menial tasks around the temple in the hope of atoning for her past wickednesses.

When the keeper saw the knight in splendid armour standing there motionless, he greeted him courteously and said,

"Good-morrow, Sir Knight? Do you come seeking the Temple of the Grail? Then know that you are even now on consecrated ground, where it is forbidden to come bearing arms or with helmet closed."

For answer Parsifal once more thrust his Spear into the earth, and laying aside his helmet knelt with his face toward the temple. Then the old knight remembered him.

"It is the youth of the swan!" he exclaimed to Kundry. "And see what he has brought back with him! The sacred Spear! O happy day on which the Spear comes home!"

Then Parsifal rose to his feet, and seeing love and joy in the old man's face he opened his arms and the two embraced right gladly.

"All hail to thee, good friend!" cried Parsifal. "Long did I fear that I should never see thy face again."

"Dost thou remember me?" asked the keeper. "Long years have passed and much grief has bent my back, since the day I let thee go forth as guileless and crack-brained."

"As indeed I was," answered Parsifal, "but through failures and hardships and many trials the guileless one has been at last enlightened, even as they sang in that strange sweet song of the temple.

"But tell me," the young man continued, "is there not something changed about this holy place? Oft have I heard about it in my wanderings. Men told me that Mount Salvat was the abode of delight; that here the birds sang, the knights went hither and thither with joy upon their faces, and the very air was filled with the spring-time of gladness. Is it not so; or is this only an idle dream?"

"It *was* so," answered the old man sadly, "but dark days have come upon Mount Salvat. For

pain of his wound, Amfortas has ceased entirely to serve the sacrament from the sacred Cup, and therefore are all the knights sad in their hearts. They have betaken themselves to cells like monks. The aged Titurel has died because he could no longer behold the Grail; and I am only living on in penance waiting till I can join him."

"Nay, but all these things must not be!" said Parsifal. "Dost thou remember telling me, long ago, that the sacred Spear—this Spear!—would heal Amfortas of his wound? I set forth to seek it that very day. Come, let us take it into his presence!"

"Pray God the oracle may come true!" exclaimed the keeper joyfully. "And thou dost come at a good season, for it is the Good Friday service today, and Amfortas has promised to uncover the Holy Grail once again, be the cost what it may. But before we go up, thou must rest and be cleansed at this spring; and I will procure a white robe for thee."

So Parsifal laved his face and his hands at the spring, while the old man went in haste for the white robe. And while he sat there, the woman came up timidly and knelt down and unfastened his sandals and washed his feet. Then Parsifal looked down and remembered her.

"Thou art Kundry," he said; "thou hast come a

long hard way, even as I have come." He sprinkled her brow with a few drops of water from the spring. "I baptise thee into a new life," he said; "come with us this day to the temple."

The tears rained down glad Kundry's face; and as she knelt there, it was transformed again into the loveliness of the maiden of the flower-garden, but purer, sweeter, and of a radiance not of earth. She was redeemed!

Just then the soft chimes of the temple bells rang forth bidding them come to the service. The keeper returned with the garment which he put upon Parsifal and the three went up the path to the gates, Parsifal in the centre, bearing the sacred Spear.

They had no sooner entered than the procession of knights filed by, preceded by the choir-boys who sang of the Holy Grail. Last of all came Amfortas, slowly and as if in great pain. He paused before the shrine and made as if to open it, while all the knights gathered about in reverent waiting.

Suddenly he paused, clasped his hands to his side and cried out:

"No! no! I cannot do it! Death is so near me, only let me die! slay me with your swords and choose another Guardian of the Grail! I cannot bear to unveil the Holy Cup! Kill me, kill me, I pray you!"

His brow was wet with agony and he writhed with pain so that the knights drew back from him in terror.

Just then Parsifal drew near in his flowing white robe bearing the Spear aloft.

"Peace, O Amfortas!" he said quietly. "Only one weapon will ease thee of that pain: it is the one that caused it."

And with the sacred Spear he touched the wound, and lo! it was healed in an instant, and Amfortas' agony was changed to rapture as he knelt before the altar.

"Thou art forgiven," Parsifal's voice went on; "forgiven to continue in thy service of the Grail. But nevermore shalt thou be its Guardian. The words of the oracle have come true.

> " 'By pity enlightened,
> My guileless one,—
> Wait thou for him
> Till my will is done!' "

Then Parsifal went reverently to the shrine and uncovered it, while all the knights fell on their knees and prayed, and the ransomed Kundry fell prostrate and bathed the altar steps with her happy tears. He drew forth the Holy Grail and held it aloft, and instantly a ray of dazzling light fell from above and struck within the Cup, so that it glowed with glory which flooded all the temple.

And down from the lofty dome fluttered a pure white dove which hovered lightly over his head. The knights saw and understood the sign; a new Guardian of the Grail was come to them. The temple had awakened to a higher service through the stainless life of Parsifal.

Let us leave them there, in that holy service before Easter, while the music rose and swelled triumphant, telling of victory over sin and death!

Lohengrin the Swan Knight

(*Lohengrin*)

"HEAR ye! hear ye! The King has come to Antwerp! Who fights upon the King's side?"

The silvery blast of a trumpet rang out, following the clear tones of a herald's voice; and in answer a great shout arose from a multitude of throats, for all the people in this wide stretching plain were eager to follow the standard of their warlike ruler.

It was in the days not long after Parsifal had come to the Temple of the Grail. The kingdom of Germany, so long a prey to warring states, had found a strong head in Henry the Fowler who protected the land from foes within and without. In times of peace it was his custom to travel from city to city holding court and listening to the grievance of every one, great or small. In war time, he levied troops and led them in person. His visit to Antwerp, on this occasion, was for both purposes, as the Hungarians had lately declared war against him and were threatening to invade Germany.

Antwerp was capital of the ancient dukedom of

Brabant, and one of King Henry's chief cities. On his coming, therefore, he was greatly troubled to find the state rent with quarrels and secret discontent.

The King held his court in the open air, under the spreading branches of a stately tree, called the "Oak of Justice," which stood on the bank of the winding river Scheldt. Here all the people gathered to pay him homage, and here—on the bright spring morning when our story opens—he caused the herald in brilliant livery to stand forth and blow upon a trumpet.

"Hear ye!" cried the herald again. "The King has come! Who fights for the King?"

Then all the people answered as with one voice, and came and knelt before the throne in token of allegiance.

The King's eye gladdened at the sight. "Verily," he said, "with such stout arms and loving hearts as these, we will drive the enemy into the sea!"

After he had greeted many by name, and many others had been presented to him, he saw one noble who had fought with him against the Danes.

"Come hither, Frederick of Telramund," he commanded. "As an oft-tried friend, I have a question to ask of you. How is it that Brabant has no head, but is rent with inner quarrels?"

Frederick of Telramund stepped forward and bowed low. He was a tall man, with beetling brows and deep, piercing eyes.

"I am thankful, my King," he began in a heavy voice and with ill-concealed excitement, "that you have seen our troubles and will lend ear to the story of them. I will tell you the truth. The former Duke of Brabant was my friend, and when he died he chose me as guardian for his children, Godfrey and Elsa. I brought them up as carefully as though they were my own, and looked forward fondly to the time when Godfrey should be duke; also—shall I confess it?—when I might win Elsa for my wife. But all these hopes were destined to fail. Elsa was a proud girl, and I fear now that she coveted the dukedom for herself, though she pretended to have great love for her brother.

"One day they went roaming in the woods and by the river's brink, as they often did. When night came, Elsa returned without her brother. She was pale and trembling, and when we asked her where he had gone, she would only reply by wringing her hands and sobbing. That is all the answer we have got from her, from that day to this, and we cannot help fearing that she drowned him, or laid other violent hands upon him.

"Of course, after this happening, I could no longer choose her hand in marriage. But I chose

instead a lady whom I now wish to present to you —Ortrud, daughter of the brave King Radbod. In former times he was king over all this land; and in my wife's name I lay claim to Brabant."

As he finished speaking, Frederick took his wife by the hand and led her forward. She was a very handsome woman, though almost of masculine type, and her eye had a watchful look like that of a crouching tigress. She bent her head with the grace of a queen.

The King knitted his brow at the story, and looked about as though seeking some one else whom he might question. Seeing his doubt, Frederick resolved upon a bold stroke. Turning he addressed the people in a loud voice, saying:

"I accuse Elsa of Brabant of the murder of her brother. If there be any here who can deny my charge, I challenge him to come forth!"

No one moved, although there were mutterings here and there and sullen shakings of the head.

The King rose suddenly and hung his shield upon a limb of the tree.

"This is the Oak of Justice!" he said, "and I promise ye that I will not depart from its shade this day, until I have made trial of this charge.

"This shield no longer shall I wear
Till judgment is pronounced, I swear."

At a signal, the herald came forward again and announced, "Now shall this cause be tried as ancient law demands!" Then he blew a loud blast upon his trumpet and called upon Elsa of Brabant to come before her King for judgment.

The people had received the announcement, that the King would try the cause, with breathless eagerness. Now they parted to right and left and looked intently along the path Elsa was expected to come. They were not disappointed. After a few moments a train of ladies appeared walking slowly, two by two, toward the Oak of Justice. Among them was one dressed in pure white. Her head was uncovered, and her golden hair fell in soft curls about her shoulders. Her blue eyes had a far-away look in them, and her pale face was marked by lines that told of suffering. The lady Ortrud looked balefully at her as she came forward, but the people drew nearer to the maiden with marks of pity that showed their old love for her.

The King himself was struck by this fair vision. The set look came out of his eyes, and he leaned forward and gently took her by the hand.

"Are you Elsa of Brabant?" he asked.

The young girl bowed and wrung her hands in silence.

"You are accused of the murder of your brother," continued the King. "What have you to say?"

"Oh, my poor brother!" cried Elsa; and not another word would she answer to the charge.

"Speak!" said the King. "Do you not know that I must adjudge you guilty unless you confide in me?"

Elsa looked up at the King and seemed to gain courage. The people gazed on the scene with stillness as of death. Elsa's voice was low but clear, and its tones were distinctly heard.

"When I have been in deep trouble," she said, "I have prayed to Heaven for help. It has been many times of late—O, many, many times! At last I was answered. I have had a dream, and it is such a beautiful dream that I know it must come true. A knight in glittering armour appeared in a vision and promised to be my champion whenever I should call upon him. O King, I claim him for my champion to-day! *He* will prove my innocence!"

Her words answered nothing and proved nothing; yet such was her manner that the people believed in her and shouted aloud that she was guiltless. The King himself seemed to seek a pretext to let her go free; but Frederick of Telramund stepped boldly forward.

"A likely story this, your Majesty!" he sneered. "Dream knights never yet have done anything; and if the Lady Elsa can but find her champion

upon earth, here I stand ready to fight him to decide this cause."

The King looked at the maiden anxiously, and her face lit up at once.

"I agree to these terms," she said.

Upon this the King gave orders that lists, or open spaces, should be cleared; and then he announced that, following ancient custom, they would rest the issue of Elsa's guilt or innocence upon single combat between champions. The herald once again came forward and blew a long blast upon his trumpet, and proclaimed,

> "Let him stand forth by Heaven's right
> Who would for Elsa's just cause fight!"

There was a painful silence, while Frederick and Ortrud looked in smiling disdain upon the poor girl.

"O my King!" she cried. "Summon him again! His home is far away and he may not have heard."

"Sound once again!" commanded the King, and again the trumpet call rang out.

Again there was intense silence. Elsa dropped upon her knees and prayed until it seemed as though her very soul would burst with emotion. Suddenly a man nearest the bank of the river startled the silence with a cry.

"A swan! a swan! And in its wake a boat bearing a knight!"

Every eye turned and gazed up the winding stream, and there, sure enough, was a beautiful white bird swimming easily and gracefully along and drawing a little boat with a knight in it.

"A miracle! a miracle!" shouted the people.

As he drew near, they saw that the knight was clad in silver armour which shone dazzling white in the sun. Amid a general hush, the swan drew the boat to the shore, and the knight stepped out. Before greeting the King or court, he dismissed the swan in a tender little song of farewell:

"I give thee thanks, my faithful swan,
Turn thee again and stem the tide;
Go back to that blest land of dawn
Where thou and I did once abide.
Full well thy loving task is done,
Farewell, farewell, belovèd swan!
My faithful swan!"

Then while the swan bent its head in sad obedience and sailed away on the current, the knight turned to the King.

"Hail, O King!" he said courteously. "I have come in answer to your summons to do battle in Elsa's cause."

"You are right welcome, noble knight, from wheresoever you come," answered the King. Then turning to Elsa, he continued, "Do you accept this knight to be your champion?"

"'Tis the knight of my dream!" she murmured, sinking at his feet.

The King struck his shield three times with his sword.

"Sound the call to combat!" he commanded.

The call was given, and Frederick of Telramund took his place sullenly in the lists. He liked not the turn affairs were taking, but his word was given and could not be withdrawn.

The stranger knight lifted Elsa gently to her feet, then prepared to face his enemy. Another stroke upon the King's shield, and the two antagonists had crossed blades with a sharp crash.

But not long did they fight. Frederick was clearly outclassed from the first; and after a few wild, furious blows, which the other lightly parried, his sword was sent flying from his hand, and he was compelled to yield to the mercy of his conqueror.

The Knight of the Swan refused to take his life; but according to the law the defeated man was accounted a perjurer and doomed to exile. With downcast head he slunk away, followed by the proud Ortrud, who glared about defiantly to the last.

But the victorious knight now heeded them not. He had turned to where Elsa stood, and held out his hands in the old gesture which every maiden

must one day understand. With a glad cry she ran and nestled in his arms.

"My hero!" she whispered.

Then the knight turned proudly toward the King, and said in the hearing of all:

"I would have the Lady Elsa as my wife."

"You have my consent with hers," replied King Henry, heartily. "And with her hand goes the dukedom of Brabant."

At this all the people shouted and threw their caps high in the air; for the new duke presented a handsome figure, while they had never liked the usurping Frederick.

"Only one promise must I exact from the fair Elsa," continued the champion. "If she cannot give it, I must release her from her silent pledge."

"What is that?" asked the King.

"She must never ask me my name, or whence I come. That I am well born and worthy of her she can decide for herself. But no question must be asked as to my past life. Can you promise this, my Elsa?"

He looked down anxiously at her, and she met his gaze frankly and trustingly.

"I promise—my husband!" she answered in low, sweet tones.

The Knight of the Swan kissed her upon the brow, while the King himself came forward and took each by the hand.

"I shall take this maiden in my charge," said Henry the Fowler, "and remain in Antwerp long enough to bestow her in marriage upon this man. Come, let us to the place and prepare for the ringing of the joy bells!"

Then once again the people shouted with delight, and came crowding up to share in the scene. The King's shield was seized from the limb where it hung, and Elsa was placed upon it and borne forth in triumph, while the Swan Knight was likewise carried upon his own shield.

To have heard the noise and rejoicing you would have thought that there was no one in all Brabant who did not share in the general happiness. But there were two who found it gall and wormwood, and these two were Frederick and Ortrud. Deprived of their wealth and power, and in danger of their lives, they suffered a just punishment for their wickedness. Frederick was for leaving Brabant at once, and seeking their fortunes in other countries. But Ortrud, whose spirit remained unbroken, would not hear of this. All along she had been his evil counsellor, and now she set going other schemes of mischief.

The two stole forth at nightfall, clothed in beggar's tattered garments, and made their way to the palace steps, where they listened to the sounds of rejoicing within the palace.

"Ah! I should still be there, if I had not listened to you," groaned Frederick, who was a man of poor courage.

"Cease your complaining!" answered Ortrud. "We will win the victory yet, and you shall be in power again, if you listen to me now."

"What can we do?"

"Have you not heard of the promise made by Elsa to this Swan Knight? He is a magician, I warrant you, and all we need do is to prove it. She has promised never to ask his name. Now if we can get her to break that promise, he will vanish—mark my words!"

Frederick sat up and looked around eagerly.

"Ortrud, you are a genius!" he said. "But how can we do this? We are beggared and exiled."

"Trust me—but hush! I hear some one on the balcony!"

It was Elsa herself, who came out for a moment to look at the stars and commune with her own great happiness. At sight of the girl's face in the glow of the window, Ortrud crept softly round the balustrade and suddenly appeared before her startled gaze.

"Pardon—pardon!" cried the crafty woman in a low tone, and sinking on the step at Elsa's feet.

"Who are you?" demanded Elsa.

"I am an outcast. Out of your great happiness pity my deep misery!"

"It is Ortrud!" exclaimed the girl, her heart made tender by her own love. "Poor woman, I did not seek to harm you. Your husband brought it on himself."

"I had naught to say," coaxed the kneeling woman. "And now you would not send me forth from your door, to wander into the wide world a beggar!"

"No!" exclaimed the generous Elsa, "I will shelter and protect you. Come with me!"

She turned to order lights from two servants at the door; and Ortrud shot a quick glance of cunning triumph at her hidden husband, before entering the palace.

All that night Frederick lurked amid the shadows of the neighbouring cathedral and waited. He knew that their wicked schemes were in safe hands, with Ortrud on the inside; and although only a few short hours remained he took heart of hope.

The wedding had been set for early the next morning, so that Henry the Fowler could go to the wars.

Hardly had the sun struck the lowest range of windows on the building, before an army of servants appeared, as if by magic, and began decorating walls, porticos, and pillars with streamers and

flowers. When the sunlight had penetrated every corner of the court a herald came out and announced the approaching wedding. The King's business demanded haste and so there had been no delay. The herald further announced that the stranger knight would accept the dukedom, but would be styled simply the Protector of Brabant; and that he was to go with the King's troops and lead the men into battle against the Hungarians.

The herald had scarcely ceased ere four pages appeared on the palace steps crying, "Make way for the Lady Elsa!"

Again the ladies-in-waiting came forth, clad in white, and behind them came Elsa looking very lovely in her bridal robes and attended by her friends and some of the noblest ladies of the state. Near her walked Ortrud whom Elsa wished to honour, and who was attired in rich and costly robes.

Slowly the wedding party filed across the palace courtyard to the wide-open doors of the great cathedral. The maids arrayed themselves on either side to let their mistress pass; but just as Elsa reached the portal, Ortrud suddenly rushed in front of her exclaiming,

"No! you shall not enter first! I am higher born than you, and must take the lead!"

"What do you mean?" asked Elsa, starting back.

"I mean that your nameless knight won his vic-

tory yesterday by fraud, and that I am still the rightful duchess of Brabant."

Elsa flushed red and answered her proudly, "A fitting return is this for my late kindness to you! And as to the victory it was won fairly in sight of all the people. Stand aside, rash woman, and let me pass!"

Ortrud stood unmoved. "You would wed a pretty champion!" she sneered. "Why, you do not know his name! And as for knowing his origin or character—forsooth!" (Here she snapped her fingers.) "I tell you he is a magician, and won his fight with my husband by powers of evil!"

"It is false!" cried Elsa wildly. "You are a slanderous——"

"The King! the King!" shouted the attendants at this moment. "Make way for the King!"

The quarrel at the doorway ceased as the King approached followed by his knights. At his right hand came the Knight of the Swan, who seeing the commotion stepped quickly forward to Elsa's side.

"What is the trouble, beloved?" he asked quietly.

"This dreadful woman!" exclaimed the girl, pointing to Ortrud. "She will not let me pass, and she has been saying wicked things about you."

The knight gave Ortrud one stern look before which even her vengeful spirit quailed.

"Stand aside!" he commanded in a low voice.

"What is wrong?" demanded the voice of the King, who had come up with the group.

"Nothing now, your Majesty. We will go forward," answered the Swan Knight, taking his trembling bride upon his arm and mounting the cathedral steps.

But at the threshold they met another interference. Frederick of Telramund, who had been lurking about watching all that happened, suddenly stepped from behind the door shouting,

"Stay a moment, Elsa of Brabant. You are being deceived, foolish girl! You do not know whom you are marrying. He is a sorcerer, and overcame me by magic!"

Elsa was like to swoon away at this unlooked-for happening. But the stranger knight whispered tenderly to her and reassured her.

The King, on his part, was thoroughly aroused by the second interruption.

"Begone, sirrah!" he exclaimed. "The fight was fair and the champion sent of Heaven. Come not into our presence again on peril of your life!"

Without further hindrance the wedding party entered the church; and while the great organ pealed its strains of joyful music the knight and his lady were blessed and pronounced man and wife.

All that day the festivities lasted. The King

had commanded that a feast be spread for every man, woman and child in the city. The new Protector of Brabant was publicly acclaimed in the afternoon; while, that evening, a state banquet was held in the palace.

Then following an old custom the maidens went ahead of the newly wedded couple to conduct them to the bridal-chamber. And as they entered its door they sang a beautiful refrain that has greeted the ears of countless brides from that to this:

"Fairest and best
We lead thee on!"

There the maidens left them and went away singing as they had come. When the last sweet note had died away, the knight took his wife's two hands tenderly within his own.

"Elsa," he murmured, "do you indeed love me; or have you wed me only from a sense of duty?"

"I have loved you ever since I beheld you in my dreams," she answered. "But how came you to seek me out?"

"I am indeed Heaven-sent, as I told you. But without your peril, I think that Love would have guided me to you. For I love you dearly, Elsa!"

"Ah, how sweet my name sounds upon your lips!" she cried softly. "If I could but utter your own, my happiness would be full."

The knight gazed at her in silence a moment, then led her to an open casement.

"Breathe all the fragrance of eventide," he said. "Do you not distinguish many sweet odours beside the dew-laden roses near you? The breeze comes soft across the meadow and sea, bringing strange memories and hints of foreign shores. Is it not all the more delightful because we cannot penetrate all these mysteries? Love itself is the greatest mystery of all. Let us love then and be happy in each succeeding day; for when they are past we cannot recall them. We can only remember, but the mystery is gone!"

"Yes, let us love and be happy," she answered doubtfully. "But, O my husband, what shall I say when evil remarks are made, as like those by that wicked woman to-day?"

"Still thinking of her?" he replied with an attempt at lightness. "She will not annoy you again. For the rest, can you not trust me?"

"Can you not trust *me?*" she insisted. "Am I not your wife and worthy of some degree of confidence?"

"Elsa, once for all, this must not be! You have given your word to respect my secret. I assure you it is not a dark secret, and that I may look you frankly and joyfully in the face, as my wife. Isn't that enough?"

"But Frederick and Ortrud? What do they know about you? Why did they—oh, I cannot get their words out of my mind!"

Elsa was in fact growing hysterical. She clung to him wildly as they stood in the window. Poor girl! her recent trials had left her an easy prey to the insidious attack of this day.

The knight was very patient with her. He realised her unstrung condition, and tried to divert her mind by placing her gently in a chair where she could look out upon the river.

"See how white the waters gleam in the moonlight!" he said. "The river seems like a silver ribbon stretching away."

"And look!" she cried, pointing. "There comes the swan-boat to take you from me! Ah, do not go!"

"Calm yourself, dear one! There is no boat."

"Oh, I cannot bear this mystery! I must question you!"

"Elsa!"

"I must, I must! What is your name?"

"Alas," he exclaimed. "Beware of what you say! Not another word I implore you!"

"Whence do you come?" she continued wildly.

At this moment a slight noise was heard at the door, and Frederick of Telramund burst in. He had enlisted the services of four of his former

party, resolved to make one last bold stroke and kill the Knight of the Swan. But again he was no match for the knight. Alarmed by the noise, the latter sprang quickly for his sword and met Frederick midway in the room. A few swift strokes and that evil man lay dead upon the floor. The four nobles were seized with fear and came and knelt before the knight craving pardon.

"Bear him to the King," he said quietly, pointing to his fallen foe. "An audience will be held at early sunrise under the Oak of Justice."

The men bowed humbly and went away with their burden.

Elsa had well-nigh fainted from the excitement and now laid her head sobbing upon the knight's shoulder.

"Forgive me!" she cried. "I recall my thoughtless words."

For answer he kissed her lingeringly on the brow and then struck a gong which summoned her attendants.

"I leave the Lady Elsa in your hands," he said. "Array her as befits a bride, at the rising of the sun, and conduct her to the King. There I will answer all she asks."

The wondering maids hastened to Elsa's side. She held out her hands to the knight beseechingly, but he passed from the room in silence with bowed head.

The next morning early the King held court again beneath the Oak of Justice. This was the day he was to start for the wars, and many knights and soldiers had assembled to march with their leader, the new Protector of Brabant. Henry had just come, and was answering the greetings of his captains, when the four nobles appeared bearing the body of Frederick of Telramund upon his shield, and followed by the weeping Ortrud.

In answer to the King's question as to the meaning of this, they replied that the Knight of the Swan would soon appear and explain everything. They had hardly finished speaking when Elsa and her maids came in view. Elsa was attired as yesterday, in her bridal dress, but her face was woebegone, her hair dishevelled and her eyes red with weeping. So pitiable was her appearance that the crowd near broke into exclamations of pity, while the King rising hastily came forward and led her to a seat.

"What is the meaning of all this?" he demanded. "By Heaven, I will know the truth!"

"Your Majesty, the Knight of the Swan will soon appear and answer all questions," said one of the maids.

The King was about to make a quick remark, when the knight himself entered the throng. The men who expected to follow him into battle greeted

him with cheers, but he made no response beyond a sad smile and shake of the head. He wore the same glittering armour of his first appearance, but his head was slightly bent as if in thought, and his steps were slow and reluctant.

The hot-blooded King could no longer restrain himself.

"I would know the meaning of these things!" he said, scarcely responding to the Swan Knight's silent greeting. He pointed to the body of Frederick. "Who has done this deed?"

"I slew him in self-defence," answered the knight. Then he told of the attack within his room, and took the four nobles to witness that he told the truth. "With your Majesty's permission I will leave the verdict to all the people," he ended.

Thus appealed to, the people cried loudly that he was innocent of wrong, and that Heaven had sent him to rid the land of a usurper and a coward.

"I also deem that you have done justly," said the King. "But what means the sorrow of this lady whom I took under my especial protection? Answer, and carefully!"

"I have promised the Lady Elsa to answer her questions, and I shall likewise answer yours," replied the knight, courteously. "The fighting men of Brabant—stout hearts and true—have gathered here to-day expecting that I shall lead them to the

wars. This cannot be. I must tell my story and then bid farewell to all."

A general murmur of dissent arose at this, but the knight stood unmoved waiting for silence. Presently as a hush fell, he began to speak again, slowly and earnestly.

"In a far-away land," he said, "there stands a sacred hill called Mount Salvat. Upon this hill rise the walls and towers of a mystic castle, called the Temple of the Grail, for within it is preserved the most precious relic in all the world—the Holy Grail. The knights who guard this shrine are a close brotherhood who have renounced the world and given their lives to self-sacrifice and good deeds. In reward for this, the sacred Cup gives them power beyond that of other men. They may journey into distant lands to help the weak and relieve distress, and always will they be victorious. But if they disclose the secret of their power, they must return to Mount Salvat.

"Thus was I sent to become the Lady Elsa's champion; and I had fondly hoped to dwell among you and be worthy of her love and trust. But now this cannot be. Enemies have persuaded her that my name and rank must be revealed; so it only is left for me to tell my lineage. I am not ashamed of this. I am the son of Parsifal, chief Guardian of the Grail. My name is Lohengrin."

As he ceased speaking, amid the profound silence, voices were heard from the river's bank.

"The swan! the swan! See, he comes again!"

Elsa threw herself upon the ground in an agony of grief.

"Ah, do not go away!" she moaned, clasping the knight's feet. "Do not go away and leave me! I shall die!"

Lohengrin extended his finger sadly toward the bend in the stream, where the swan drew the boat majestically forward.

"It is the summons of Heaven," he said. "I have no other choice. Farewell, beloved, forever!"

He raised her and she clung wildly to him as though she could not let him go. He gently resisted her.

"See!" he said. "Here is my sword and ring and bugle, which will bring victory in every battlefield. Keep them for your brother, of whom I give you good news. He is alive and may return in safety one day. I had hoped to bring him back to you within the year if I had been permitted to remain."

"But you have failed, my fine hero!" cried a taunting voice which made them all turn quickly. It was Ortrud who had come forward for one last bitter triumph. "You have failed, so you and your poor pretty little bride may hear the truth. It was *I*

who caused her to ask those troublesome questions! And it was *I* who made away with her precious brother! I know one or two tricks of magic myself, and one of them turned the boy—into yonder swan! Ha, ha, ha!"

She laughed harshly and pointed to the mystic bird now at the river's brink, while King and courtiers looked on in amazed silence.

Lohengrin alone remained at her outburst. He sank upon his knees and, lifting his noble face so that the sunlight seemed to irradiate it with a glory, he prayed to Heaven earnestly and silently for aid. Suddenly, down a beam of light, a white dove fluttered. It was the dove of the Grail. Accepting this as a sign that his prayer was answered, Lohengrin unfastened the swan from the boat, when the bird vanished beneath the surface of the water, and in its stead rose a fair young knight. Lohengrin took his hand and led him forward.

"This is Godfrey, the rightful Duke of Brabant!" he said. "Behold your chief, who will lead you to victory!"

Godfrey knelt in homage to the King who had raised him up and embraced him, while the people promised him their glad allegiance. Then Godfrey and Elsa rushed into each other's arms in the joy of reunion. Overcome with rage, Ortrud

sank swooning across the steps of the throne. Meanwhile Lohengrin, seeing that Elsa was in the arms of her brother, entered the boat, whose chains were seized by the tiny dove. A flutter of its wings, and lo! the boat moved easily out on the stream and went swiftly forward against the current.

When Elsa raised her eyes from her dear brother's face, she beheld the boat already far out upon the sunlit water. The knight stood leaning upon his shield, his whole figure shining, it seemed, with unearthly radiance, and alas! fading away like some splendid dream.

With a last despairing cry of "My husband! my husband!" Elsa sank prostrate upon the shore. Her dream it had been, and it was ended.

Tannhäuser the Knight of Song

(Tannhäuser)

AFTER the coming of Christianity into the world, people no longer believed in the old gods and goddesses. They were called evil spirits, or else people said that they had never really existed at all. But there was one goddess who was still believed in, although she was feared and even hated. She was Venus, goddess of Love, and in the heyday of her power she was worshipped in many lands. For did not Love stir the hearts of all men, and would it not rule all the world at the last? And so Venus had been given all honour and affection; and in return she had been the kindest of all the deities and had tried to make her subjects happier and more considerate one with another.

But now, as I say, all this was changed. People had ceased to worship Venus, and in revenge she began to do everything she could to injure them. Instead of pure affection which makes the heart glad, she sent a baser love which is only selfish and which brings jealousy and quarrels and heart-aches in its train. And Venus herself, from being a god-

dess, became a witch. She went to dwell in a deep cavern within a mountain in Germany which came to be called the Venusberg. Here she would lie in wait for men whom she would enchant and keep imprisoned within the mountain forever. They would forget their homes and loved ones—everything—while they served her and were subject to her wiles. They no longer saw the sun or moon or stars or the fresh green of the springing grass. Instead, they lived in a rose-coloured twilight filled with beautiful clouds, the heavy perfume of flowers, and the dancing, laughing figures of youths and maidens—spirits of this mysterious underworld ruled by the witch Venus.

One day while this enchantress was watching and waiting near the entrance to her grotto she saw a knight coming slowly over the mountains. He was young and handsome, with the first fine strength of early manhood, but just now he seemed moody and dispirited. Venus who could read the hearts of men knew who he was and whence he came, but as you have not yet heard, I will pause to tell you.

The young knight's name was Tannhäuser and he lived in the country of Thuringia. At this time there were many minstrels, or strolling singers, in the land, and so popular were they at all the courts that even the knights laid aside their swords and

spears and forgot their joustings for the harp and its music and the contests of song. The King of this country, in his castle at Wartburg, had held many song contests or tournaments, and great was the honour to any knight or minstrel who won his prizes.

One of the best harpers and sweetest singers of them all was Tannhäuser. He had early shown a fine ear for music, and when the time came for him to enter the contests, he won many prizes and bade fair to outdistance all the others. Indeed, it was whispered that so appealing were his harp chords and so wonderful was his voice, that he had quite won the heart of the King's niece, the Princess Elizabeth.

Yet Tannhäuser was not entirely happy. He loved the Princess and he loved his music, but although both smiled upon him he felt vaguely dissatisfied. It seemed to him as though the honours and pleasures of the world had come with too little effort. He wanted to reach out beyond for other things still unattainable—he knew not what.

Finally he bade farewell to the Princess, and to his friends at the castle, saying that he was going to travel in distant lands. The parting was sorrowful, although he had fully resolved upon it; and now as he set forth across the mountains carrying only his harp he was doubly sad and cast down.

Suddenly the rock door of a cavern swung aside before his gaze as if by magic. In the dimly lighted entrance he saw a beautiful woman standing and stretching out her arms to him. Her figure was outlined by a halo, as it were, caused by the rosy glow which came from within the cave. It was Venus who sought to lure him. Her terrible witches' eyes were hid behind a smiling face, and she was once again the fairest woman in all the world. Now she wove a spell while she beckoned to him.

"Come," she said softly. "I have seen your unrest and alone can bring you happiness. In my blest land you will find all the music and beauty for which you seek. Come!"

Scarcely knowing what he did, the knight obeyed the enchantress and entered the portal. As he did so the heavy stone closed behind him and at the same moment the memory of his earth-life vanished like a dream. He had become in a moment a subject of Venus. Taking him by the hand she led him far into the depth of her mysterious realm, and at every step his wonder and delight increased. Here the very trees seemed attuned to harmony. There the waves of a deep blue lake sang of love as they beat upon the shore. Out on the water swam bewitching mermaids; while on the strand the light graceful figures of elves and sirens engaged in mimic warfare.

He saw a beautiful woman

Here at last Tannhäuser thought he had found true beauty and happiness. And so he gladly served his queen for a whole year, thinking of it only as a single day. He had, in fact, completely forgotten his old life, and lived wholly in the present, content with the joys of the moment.

But at last a change came over him. Something, he knew not what, stirred within him and told him that he was a slave. He began to realise that he was under the power of a spell and that he had given up many things for which he now dimly longed. He began to grow restless and silent.

The watchful Venus saw this new mood almost before he was aware of it. Anxious to overcome it, she prepared new and wilder pleasures day by day. Dances, pageants, masquerades, tableaux, banquets and tournaments followed each in bewildering succession. Concerts were given which far excelled the music of earth. Her wiles seemed successful. For the time, Tannhäuser forgot his moodiness; and when Venus asked him to compose a song in her honour, he responded with one full of praise of her beauty and charm. Then he sang of the life at Venusberg and its attractiveness. But even as he sang his new found longing gained hold of him and he ended with an outburst which surprised even him:

"'Tis freedom I must win or die,
For freedom I can all defy.
In rose-hued grottos I am longing
For all the soft wood zephyrs thronging,
For vision of fair heaven's blue,
The songs of birds, the old earth's view!
Come life, come death, forth would I go
To taste of human joy or woe.
No more in slavery would I lie,—
O queen, O goddess, let me fly!"

Venus was full of anger at this direct appeal for freedom, in spite of all her arts; but she hid her feelings behind a smile and said in soft tones,

"Whither would you fly? Are not all things here in perfection? What more would you desire? Ask, and you shall be obeyed!"

"I want only freedom," said the knight mournfully.

"What is freedom? Where could you go? The earth you speak of has forgotten you. Here you are immortal and all things are yours."

"Still I would away," persisted Tannhäuser. "I know not where. O queen, give me leave to try another life for myself—something that will meet this new found longing within my breast! I will not be disloyal to your memory. Indeed, I will sing your praise, and yours alone. But give me leave to go!"

"Then depart!" said Venus, her voice growing

cold with anger. "Out of my sight, ungrateful mortal! But heed well my warning. You have lost your hold upon the other world by lingering here, and men will shun you when they find whence you come. Some day you will return to me, and willingly. Till then, away!"

She stamped her foot, and in a moment the scene changed like the dissolving picture upon a stage. Instead of the grotto with its perfume and dim lights and dancing figures, Tannhäuser found himself lying upon a grassy knoll under the wide blue sky of heaven and with the bright sunlight streaming full upon him. He rose as if waking from a deep sleep, stretched his limbs and took a long breath of the sweet pure air. As he did so he cast his eyes across the valley and instantly his past life came back to him fresh and distinct as if but yesterday.

There stood the noble castle of Wartburg where he had taken part in the contests of song; where the King had been gracious to him; and where the beautiful Elizabeth had smiled at his coming. A pang smote his heart when he remembered her sweet graciousness. Where was she now; and how long had it been since he proved so unworthy of her?

Near by, a shepherd played upon his pipe while his flock grazed contentedly near him. Presently

the piper called the sheep and they followed him down the valley to fresh pastures.

Then the sound of men's voices singing came to the knight's ears from a distant mountain path. Slowly it drew near and grew more distinct—a mournful yet beautiful melody chanted by a group of pilgrims on their way to Rome. As the words of the penitential song reached him, the knight felt for the first time the weight of his sin in turning aside from the path of duty. Overcome with remorse he fell upon his knees before a wayside cross and prayed fervently for forgiveness.

While he knelt a new sound smote the air. It was the blast of hunting horns mingled with the joyous baying of hounds. Presently the King himself entered with a troop of huntsmen starting out upon the chase. As they passed near the kneeling knight the King recognised him, and reigning his horse he asked kindly where Tannhäuser had been.

"I have been in strange lands, your Majesty," answered the minstrel knight sadly. "I went in search of many things, but I found them not. I pray you let me fare on my way."

"Not so," answered the King. "We have missed you greatly in the lists of song, and upon the chase. Stay with us at least for a time."

The other knights joined the entreaties of the

King. To tell the truth, some were not over anxious for his return, as they remembered only too well how he had vanquished them in singing. But there was one of their number who had been Tannhäuser's steadfast friend—Wolfram von Eschenbach by name—who hastened to greet him and urge him to remain with them. Wolfram had been a rival of Tannhäuser, not only in song but also for the favour of the Princess. Yet this did not detract from his generous welcome.

But still the wandering minstrel hesitated to return; and it is probable that he would have gone on his way had not Wolfram said in a low voice,

"Let the welcome of still another win you back to us. There is one yonder in the castle to whom the sight of your face will bring back the light in her eyes and the smile on her lips. In sooth she has drooped sadly since you went away. And the contests of song which she was wont to grace with her presence are now forsaken by her. Need I tell her name to you? Have you indeed forgotten the fairest among maidens, the Princess Elizabeth?"

Tannhäuser trembled violently at the mention of her name. A deep longing came over him to behold her face once more and hear the sound of her voice, although he felt with tenfold anguish the sense of his own unworthiness. His eyes were full

of tears as he turned and looked toward the castle shining in the sunlight upon the farther hill.

"I pray you lead me to her presence," he said simply.

"Come!" commanded the King, seeing Wolfram take Tannhäuser by the hand. And turning with all his cavalcade he escorted the wanderer back to the castle with all the pomp of a conqueror.

That very night had been set apart for one of the yearly contests of song; and though the lists had long been closed, the King gave command that Tannhäuser's name should be added. The Princess Elizabeth had not been visible when the company first returned to the castle. But she had heard of her knight's return, and had joyfully promised to attend the contest; so the occasion bade fair to be of more than usual splendour.

In the evening, before the expected guests were assembled, the Princess went to the Minstrels' Hall —a large circular chamber with high columns and arched roof—to attend personally to setting it in order, and also perchance, as her heart confessed, to catch an early glimpse of her beloved knight.

Fair was the Princess as a May morning, with deep blue eyes that had caught some of the far-off sky in them. Her hair was soft and golden and curly as that of a little child. Slight of frame was

she, but with a gracefulness and height that gave her a queenly dignity. Her cheeks, too often pale of late, were to-day flushed with animation. She had indeed missed her minstrel sadly, and now her heart bounded at the news of his return.

Presently she heard a familiar footfall in the room, and knew without looking up that it was he.

"O Princess, forgive!" said a voice. Tannhäuser was kneeling at her feet, his hands stretched out imploringly.

"You must not kneel to me," she answered, gently endeavouring to raise him. "It is not for me to forgive. Only tell me where you have been so long."

"I cannot tell you that," he replied brokenly. "I have wandered far away from your dear presence; and between yesterday and to-day the veil of oblivion is dropped. Every remembrance has forever vanished save one thing only rising from the darkness,—the thought that some day I might behold your face again and hear you say, 'I forgive.'"

Elizabeth covered her face with her hands, but the glad tears trickled between her fingers; and Tannhäuser, beholding her emotion, realised how deeply he had been loved and what a pearl he had cast away.

But the Princess like all loving women was for-

giving. She asked no more questions of the minstrel, but when he took one of her hands and then the other, as all lovers will, she let them linger in his own in perfect content.

The entrance of the King broke upon their little scene of reconciliation. He saw it all at a glance and came forward with a frank smile.

"Ah, it is as I had hoped!" he said, as he took a hand of each and held it for a moment. "Now let us have no more quarrels, but live together as harmoniously as one of our minstrel's songs."

Thus it was that Tannhäuser realised, in a great wave of thankfulness, that his old life was still open to him, and not closed as Venus had said. He resolved to be worthy henceforth of his position and honours. Above all would he cherish this sweet Princess who loved him so unselfishly.

Not long after this, the sound of trumpets proclaimed that the contest was about to begin. The King and the Princess took their places upon a dais at one side of the hall, while Tannhäuser retired to make his proper entry with the other minstrel knights.

Soon the people began to throng the hall. Nobles and ladies came first and passed before the throne and bowed before taking their seats. Then came warriors and chosen guests. And finally with another flourish of the trumpets entered the singers

of the evening. Each was a famous knight who like Tannhäuser had laid aside the sword in favour of the gentler harp. The fame of some of these knights, like Wolfram von Eschenbach and Walter von der Vogelweide, is known to this day. But among them all none was more handsome or of better renown than Tannhäuser.

As these knights did obeisance and took the places assigned to them, the King rose and thanked them all for their attendance. The subject of the songs, he said, was to be "Love"; and whoso should sing best on this lofty theme should receive the prize from the hand of the Princess Elizabeth. Let him ask what he would added the generous King, and it should be granted.

More than one of the knights had been a suitor for the Princess's hand, and they saw in this promise a reward for their dearest hopes. So you may imagine what a wave of suppressed excitement went around all the crowded hall at this announcement. The hands of the minstrels trembled as they drew lots for the order of their songs.

The lot of Wolfram came first, and amid a profound hush he rose to begin.

Thrumming the harp strings with a practised hand he began in a low clear voice to sing of unselfish devotion and chivalry. Wolfram had long loved the Princess, but had generously yielded place

in favour of his friend Tannhäuser. Now his song showed the nobility of the man. He paid tribute to the ladies of the court among whom the Princess shone as some rare gem. Then, his voice rising steadily higher till it thrilled his hearers, he sang of the one true love that counted its highest joy the sacrifice of even life itself for the loved one.

When Wolfran had finished, the hall resounded with cries of acclamation; for indeed his song had been beautiful, and no less true. Tannhäuser alone did not join in the applause. While the song was being sung he had sat silent as one in a dream. Again before his eyes came the vision of the fairy grotto with its gorgeous pictures and entrancing music. He seemed to see the bewitching figure of Venus and to hear his own voice as he promised her, "I will sing your praise and yours alone."

Scarcely knowing what he did, Tannhäuser sprang to his feet, before the applause for his rival had subsided, and began to sing an answer to Wolfram's strain. But how different was his theme! Instead of the pure exalted love which gloried in self-sacrifice, he sang of selfish desire which sought only for personal gratification. Truly the enchantment was still upon him, for he could think only of the life of the grotto and the round of pleasures which had been planned for him, rather than of any devotion upon his own part. But that was the

way in which Venus, once the goddess of true love, now weakened men's minds.

When Tannhäuser began to sing, the audience gave him close heed. He had not proceeded far, however, with his strange theme, when murmurs of anger and dissent began to be heard, which increased until one of the minstrels at length sprang to his feet.

"The love you sing is false!" he cried; "false as your own heart! We will not hear it in silence, nor suffer you thus to cast a slur upon all true knights. I challenge you to mortal combat!"

These words were loudly cheered by other minstrels. The entire hall was in an uproar until the King arose and commanded silence. Then Wolfram was seen standing once more with harp in hand, beckoning to be heard.

In words of kindly reproach he rebuked Tannhäuser for his selfish and unworthy song. He could not know what real devotion was, Wolfram said, if he placed it upon so low a plane. Then Wolfram again touched his harp strings and sang a pleasing tender refrain in praise of the love to which they all aspired.

But Tannhäuser rudely interrupted him, and heeding not the clamour which broke forth again, he sang in wild reckless fashion of the life he had led during the past year. He told of the grotto,

its music, its perfumes, its exquisite scenes and round of delights presided over by Venus herself.

"Your heroic self-sacrifice," he ended sneeringly, "is cold and tame in comparison with this! And the fairest women of earth pale into insignificance beside this wonderful goddess. Ah, Venus, I have kept my promise! *Thine* be the praise!"

He ended as one in a trance—as in truth the poor knight must have been. He stood motionless with gaze fixed as it were upon some hidden scene, while his harp fell clattering from his hand to the ground.

Then the outcry burst forth with redoubled fury. The minstrels surged forward tumultuously crying:

"He has been to the Venusberg! He has fallen under the power of the evil one! Away with him! Kill him!"

In their anger and horror of him they must have slain him, had not some one interposed. But quick as thought a slender, white-robed figure stood between them and the misguided knight, and held out her hands entreatingly. It was Elizabeth. She had sat there sick at heart listening to her chosen minstrel's song. All too well she saw how unworthy was the one to whom she had given her heart; but, once given, she could not recall it in a moment. She would pray for him, and live in the hope that he might yet prove worthy.

"Stop!" she cried to the nobles who circled about Tannhäuser, with swords drawn. "Stop, I command you! Would you slay him with all his sins ripe upon his head?"

"He has dishonoured knighthood!" muttered the minstrel who had previously challenged him. "He deserves no mercy."

"Then that is all the more reason why you should grant mercy," she answered.

By this time the King had asserted his authority, and soon the semblance of peace was restored. Then Elizabeth in all her sweet dignity pleaded the cause of Tannhäuser. Addressing now the King, now the nobles, and now the knight himself, she pointed out that Tannhäuser was still under the spell of evil into which he had fallen, and was not accountable for his deeds.

"Give him another opportunity, O my King!" she concluded. "Perchance in the doing of some penance or some gracious act, his better heart will assert itself, and he will then see how he has wounded all our hearts this day."

As she finished speaking she turned, to find at her feet the penitent knight. The vision had passed leaving him bowed down under the burden of his sin and unworthiness. He kissed the hem of her garment while tears flowed fast and unchecked from his eyes. For his life he cared not a straw.

But that he should have sunk so low in the eyes of this noble woman—the thought smote his heart with keenest anguish!

Then the voice of the King came to him, as it were an echo,—

"One path alone can save you from perdition and everlasting woe, abandoned man! That path is now open to your steps. To-day a band of pilgrims are setting forth on their toilsome way to Rome. Depart with them and seek pardon for your sins."

Even as the King spoke, a chant was heard through the open portal. Tannhäuser recognised it as the same sweet strain he had heard that morning by the wayside cross. He kissed the hem of Elizabeth's robe once again and dared to look with mute entreaty into her eyes. Then he sprang quickly to his feet and addressed the King in two wild, hopeful words.

"To Rome!" he cried, and hurried from the hall to join the pilgrim band.

One year passed slowly by. Again it was springtime, fragrant with the bursting of buds and melodious with the song of nesting birds. And now the return of the pilgrims was anxiously expected at Wartburg. But among them all, no heart was more anxious than Elizabeth's. Day

after day she had sat in the casement overlooking the valley. Night after night she had knelt in fervent prayer for the safety of one who was a wanderer over the face of the earth. And daily would she go, attended by her maids, to the little wayside cross where Tannhäuser had knelt when the pilgrims passed by. Indeed, her whole life seemed to hang upon the love which she had given and could not recall. Her prayer was only that her loved one might be forgiven, and that she might see his face again before she died.

One afternoon just at sunset while she knelt, as her custom was, before the cross, Wolfram von Eschenbach approached her. His love was still as noble and unselfish as it had been in former days, and so he longed almost as earnestly as she for the return of her pilgrim, forgiven. That she might be happy and restored to health was his great desire. To-day the sight of her pale and wasted features alarmed him.

"Health to you, my Princess!" he said, saluting her, and then continued, "Methinks it is now about the time of year when our pilgrim band should return."

"Hast heard any news?" she asked, starting up.

"None. But the hermit Peter is of opinion that they will be back before another change of the moon."

"Ah, God grant that they may!" the Princess said wearily sinking again before the cross.

While Wolfram stood gazing sadly at her dear face, she suddenly turned her head, and a look of rapt attention came into her eyes.

"Listen!" she exclaimed softly, while she sprang again to her feet. "Listen! do you not hear it? It is *their* song!"

It was indeed the far-off chant of the pilgrims which her quick ear had caught. They were returning at last!

Soon the little company came in sight, and then filed slowly by, rejoicing that their penance had been accepted and their sins forgiven. But to the eager eyes of the two onlookers one figure did not appear. Tannhäuser was not among them.

"He will never return!" said Elizabeth quietly; and giving one last despairing glance down the valley she fell upon her knees and made a last pitiful little prayer. It was that death might soon come to ease her aching heart. Until then she vowed devoted service to the church, and she asked in return that Tannhäuser might still be forgiven.

The prayer ended, Elizabeth rose and slowly walked away toward the castle. Wolfram looked after her, as long as she was in sight, with a strange foreboding clutching at his heart-strings,—it was that he would never see her again alive.

The sun had long since sunk, and the twilight was deepening, but Wolfram still lingered by the little cross made sacred by her presence. As he tarried, the evening star rose above the rim of hills and began to glow with peaceful brilliancy. It seemed to Wolfram as though the soul of Elizabeth were there, shining in that far-off sky. He began to sing a beautiful measure filled with this thought and beginning,

"O thou sublime, sweet evening star!"

Scarcely were the last notes silent when a pilgrim drew near. He was tattered, footsore and dejected, yet at the first glance Wolfram knew him.

"Tannhäuser!" he exclaimed. "What does this mean? Do not tell me that you have not received pardon, for the King would not allow you to return otherwise."

Tannhäuser did not reply to his question, but merely said:

"Show me the road to the Venusberg. I have lost my way."

"You have indeed lost your way, unhappy man, if you would return to that evil place!" exclaimed his friend. "But first tell me, have you been to Rome?"

"I have been to Rome."

"Were not your sins forgiven?"

"You see how I return," answered Tannhäuser defiantly.

"I pray you, for old friendship's sake, tell me all!" pleaded Wolfram. "Did you not do penance, and then go before the Pope?"

"Aye, so I did! Every pain and penance set forth in the calendar I did faithfully perform. I afflicted my body with grievous blows. I gave all my substance to the poor. I ministered to the sick. I prayed night and morning before every shrine. I asked forgiveness continually, yet my soul felt heavy and oppressed. Then I went before the Holy Father and confessed all my sin. He had pardoned the other members of our band; but when he heard that I had lived a year in the Venusberg he was filled with horror and indignation.

"'Out of my sight!' he exclaimed. 'There is no mercy for such as you! As soon would I expect this staff in my hand to bud and bring forth green leaves.'

"Thus am I for all time accursed," continued the wanderer bitterly. "There is but one thing left for me to do. The enchantress told me that all men would renounce me and that when I was driven from the world I could find refuge again in her grotto. I must turn to her."

"Ah, do not go!" said Wolfram, laying a detaining hand upon his friend's shoulder. "Do not

throw your last slender chance of salvation away; but live a life of good deeds and self-sacrifice! There was one who knelt at this cross only this evening and prayed to heaven for your pardon. Such prayers do not go unheeded!"

"Too late!" groaned Tannhäuser. "I am utterly unworthy and cast off! If you will not direct my steps to the Venusberg, I must summon the goddess herself to my aid."

And raising his voice he called aloud to Venus, under the name of goddess, and asked her to aid his distress.

Instantly the shades of evening were lighted by a ruddy glow, while a heavy fragrance smote the senses. In a radiant mist dim figures were seen which danced forward laughingly and beckoned and pointed. And down the bright broad pathway they trod, a flood of rose-coloured light streamed from a portal in the side of the hill, while there in the entrance stood Venus, a vision of evil beauty and charm.

"Farewell, forever!" cried Tannhäuser to his friend. "I go to the only haven left for me."

"No, no!" exclaimed Wolfram; "an angel is even now pleading your cause in Heaven. It is the soul of Elizabeth! See!"

He pointed as he spoke to a procession of woe that was filing out of the castle gate. It was a

group of mourners bearing torches and chanting a solemn refrain. As it drew near a bier was discerned in the midst, and thereon lay the lifeless form of the Princess.

"Elizabeth! Ah, dear Lord have pity!" said Tannhäuser in hushed tones while he watched the procession advance. "Have pity and save me from the power of the evil one!"

At these words the magic light of the Venusberg vanished as suddenly as it had come. The enchantress realised that her victim was lost to her forever.

But Tannhäuser paid no heed to these things. He stood only gazing at the mournful procession which was passing by. At a gesture from Wolfram it halted; and then Tannhäuser came with slow, reverent steps to the side of the bier. As he sank upon his knees his strength suddenly left him and he felt as though his hold upon life were slipping away. But with it went his burden of sin and sorrow, leaving behind a blessed peace such as he had never known before.

"Elizabeth—dear saint in heaven—pray for me!" he murmured.

His head sank down until his forehead touched her hand.

Suddenly the intense stillness was broken by a thrilling cry from the outer edge of the circle.

"A miracle! a miracle!" said a voice.

Wolfram pushed his way gently to his friend's side. In his hand was the Pope's staff—and it had budded and brought forth green leaves!

"See the sign which God hath sent!" he said in hushed tones. "It is a token that all your sins are forgiven."

Tannhäuser's face brightened into a glorious smile, but he uttered no sound. Instead, his head fell forward again until it was pillowed by Elizabeth's white arm. The way-worn pilgrim had ended his journey. The Knight of Song had heard the harmony of true love sung by a celestial choir. His wandering steps had been guided by the faith of one steadfast soul into the ways of peace.

The Master Singers

(*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*)

YOU and I have just read of a song contest which ended sadly; so I know we shall be glad to read about another which ended in quite different fashion. But how that was, I cannot tell you beforehand. You must follow the story for yourself.

At the time when the knights were glad to be known as minstrels—or "minnesingers," as they were called in Germany—the plain citizens and tradespeople were likewise interested in the art of song-writing. Sometimes they formed musical societies, or guilds, which laid down certain rules and offered prizes; and any one was at liberty to try for these prizes, provided he obeyed all the rules.

The quaint old city of Nuremberg was one of the chief music centres of the day, being widely noted for its guilds and contests. One of the leading societies was composed entirely of tradespeople, such as the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick-maker, and every fellow became so filled with the spirit of the times that he couldn't sharpen a knife

or blow a bellows without keeping time with his feet and trying to whistle a brand new tune in the doing of it! In fact, Hans Sachs, the genial old cobbler, was perpetually hammering out new ditties with lusty blows upon his leather, so that many of his verses are known to this day.

The rules of this guild, I am telling you about, were somewhat odd. When a person composed a certain number of tunes he was called a singer. When he could compose the words to fit a given piece of music, he was called a poet. And when he could write both words and music he was given the title of Master Singer, spelled in capital letters, and mightily proud was he of this distinction! Of course, the music sung before this society had to conform to set principles which they believed right. But this was the great trouble with such societies; for while they fostered much song-writing, very little of it was original or different from the tweedle-dum, tweedle-dee which had gone before.

Nevertheless, the citizens of Nuremberg were quite vainglorious over their guild, and believed it turned out the finest singers in the land. Its yearly contests were widely attended, and great was the rivalry each year to secure the chief prize, which was the title of Master Singer.

But great as had been the contests of the past, the excitement was increased tenfold upon a day

when the leading goldsmith of the city, Veit Pogner by name, announced a special prize for the coming contest. He said that he would give his fortune to the winner and also bestow upon him the hand of his daughter Eva. But one proviso was made to this generous offer: the suitor must be to some extent suitable to Eva herself. By this means Herr Pogner hoped not only to bring out new and great musicians at the contest, but also to wed his daughter only to a Master Singer—upon which last his heart had been set.

Eva herself had held quite different ideas on the subjects of music and marriage. A light-hearted and somewhat coquettish girl, her pretty head had been interested in many other things besides the monotonous singing of the butcher and the baker, or the pompous airs of the dried-up little town clerk, Sixtus Beckmesser, who had long aspired in secret for her favour.

It must be confessed, indeed, that Eva was not always as sedate as she might be. On the day when our story opens, she had attended church very dutifully, but her eyes had wandered from her hymn-book more than once despite the energetic nudges of her maid Magdalen. The secret of Eva's inattention was revealed at the close of the service when, as they turned to leave the church, a handsome young knight stepped forward. His

name was Walter von Stolzen, and although he lived in an adjoining province, this was not the first time he had sought speech with the pretty Eva.

To-day he had hastened to church to see her and ask her a momentous question. He had heard some rumours of her father's plan to wed her to a Master Singer and it had filled his heart with wild unrest.

"A word with you, I beseech," he said to Eva in a low tone as she and her maid drew near where he stood.

"Magdalen, I have forgotten my kerchief," said Eva, turning to the maid. "Will you not see if it is in the pew?"

The maid went in search of the missing article and presently returned with it.

"Oh, I am so careless!" exclaimed her mistress. "I had a little scarf-pin on, when I came in. See if I have dropped it thereabouts."

Magdalen went and after some little time she came back with the pin.

"Thank you. You are a good girl," said Eva. "Now if you will find where I have left my prayer-book, I think we will be quite ready to start."

The maid returned to the pew a third time, and when she brought the book, her mistress appeared immensely relieved. So did the handsome young knight, for, as you may guess, he had been making

the most of these moments. The question which had so troubled him and which he had found time to ask Eva was this:

"Has your father promised your hand in marriage?"

"Yes," said the mischievous Eva; but seeing how cast down her reply made the young man, she added, "but the bridegroom has not yet been chosen."

"Not chosen? How can you be promised else?"

Eva laughed teasingly, but as the maid would soon return she told him in a few hurried words about the contest of song.

"It is to be held to-morrow," she ended, "and whoever is declared the victor and Master Singer will also win my hand—so my father says."

The little light in her eyes as she added the last words would have set Walter's heart still farther at rest, if he had seen it; but as it was, his first keen anxiety had given way to a yet keener interest in the contest of the morrow.

"Tell me farther of the singing," he said entreatingly; "for you know I must needs take part in it. My whole happiness hangs upon the result!"

Eva felt her cheeks grow red. However the maid had come back for the third time, and she saw no excuse to tarry longer.

"Magdalen," she said, "this gentleman—one of

my father's friends—has heard about the song tournament to-morrow. Can you tell him anything about it?" And Eva gave the young man a smile of encouragement and left the church.

Now Magdalen was not so blind as her mistress thought. She had seen the knight on other occasions and had liked his face and manner. "That's a good match!" she had whispered within herself. To-day she had gone back to the pew willingly enough, for her mistress wished it. Besides, was not David the sexton back there? And David was a likely lad himself, albeit he was somewhat awkward.

Magdalen did not tarry long after her mistress. She gave the knight a swift look out of her black eyes and said:

"There's David—he that's the sexton. Go ask him about the contest and tell him Magdalen sent you. Belike he can tell you all about it." She then curtseyed and hastened after Eva.

Without more ado the knight went in search of the sexton. David was easily found, for he had seen the handsome stranger talking with Magdalen and his own jealous interest had been aroused. But when Walter greeted him courteously and stated his errand, David grinned and pulled at a shock of sandy hair.

"Oho, my master!" quoth he, "so you would

thrum a harp with the best of them to-morrow! But know you the rules?"

"No, I do not," answered Walter a trifle impatiently, "and that is what I would learn, an it please you."

"Ah, but the rules are the chief thing, good sir! They are not to be learned in a moment, and they are more important than the song itself. No one can be a Master Singer unless he knows the rules by heart. I have been learning both cobbling and singing from Hans Sachs, the shoemaker, and I do assure you, sir, it is no easy task."

"But can you tell me some of these rules?" persisted Walter.

"That can I, as far as I've gone," answered David. "You take your harp so, and hold it *so,* and you thrum a chord with your thumb sticking up in the air like this. Then you thrust one knee out in advance of the other until you go through your first measure, which must have so many beats and pauses."

"But what has that to do with the music?" cried Walter, almost in despair.

"Oh, everything, I guess!" said David; "only that's about as far as I've studied. But I'll tell you what to do. This very day they are going to hold an examination here in this chapel. You stay and apply for admission into the guild. Then you will

see the rules you will have to follow. Here come the 'prentices now to get the chairs in readiness."

As he spoke a number of young men came in and began pushing a curtained platform out into the middle of the room. Around it they placed benches and chairs.

" That is the marker's box," said David, pointing to the platform.

"What is it for?" asked Walter.

"Why the marker sits inside, while the singing is going on, and marks up the mistakes on a slate. When a singer has seven marks against him, the marker declares he is outsung and outdone."

The astonished knight was about to ask other questions when the door opened and members of the guild began to arrive. Among the first were Herr Pogner the goldsmith and Sixtus Beckmesser the town clerk. Beckmesser was to be marker and his usual sense of importance was much increased by the fact. He swelled out his thin chest and strutted grandly by the goldsmith's side, telling him of his own aspirations in the coming contest. Beckmesser was bald-headed and a widower who had seen the best side of fifty years, yet he felt that Eva would be doing well if she got *him,* especially if his dignity as town clerk was heightened by that of Master Singer. But when he saw Walter step forward and greet the goldsmith, who re-

ceived him kindly, and begin to ask questions about the contest, Beckmesser's face grew glum, and he inwardly resolved that if this young fellow tried to enter as his rival, there would be plenty of marks against him on the marker's slate.

Hans Sachs the cobbler and all the other members of the guild now having taken their places, the roll was called by Beckmesser. Then Herr Pogner arose and stated the terms of the contest for the ensuing day, and repeated his offer to give his fortune and daughter to the winner of the prize. He continued:

"It is our purpose this day to enter candidates for the contest. So I have the pleasure of presenting one who has but now arrived and who hands me good letters from friends of mine in the neighbouring state of Franconia. His name is Walter von Stolzen."

Walter stood forward, and the members of the guild eyed him solemnly.

"Who taught you the art of music?" asked one.

"Nature has been my teacher," answered the young man modestly. "I have heard her voice in the rustling leaves, the babbling brook, and the singing birds."

"Humph!" said Beckmesser. "But who has taught you the rules?"

"I have known very few rules save only such as

were taught me by Walter von der Vogelweide."

"A good master!" said the genial Hans Sachs.

"But long since dead! So what could he know of our rules?" grumbled Beckmesser.

After further questions and quibbling on the part of the members, they agreed to give the knight a trial and judge for themselves. So Beckmesser climbed into his curtained platform with alacrity, and Walter was asked to begin his song.

Walter did so, singing a sweet tender melody of his own, which he had undoubtedly composed to the accompaniment of the whispering winds. For while it was beautiful and original it paid no attention whatever to the artificial rules of the guild. Before he had sung two measures, Beckmesser thrust his head out of the curtain crying,

"Stop, stop! you are outsung and outdone!"

And the clerk showed a slate covered with marks.

"You should have let him finish his song," said Hans Sachs. "For my part, I thought it had great merit."

"No one asked for your opinion," said the clerk rudely. "If you do not know more than that about singing, you would better stick to your last and finish that pair of shoes you promised me to-morrow."

Hans Sachs laughed good-naturedly, but insisted that the singer be allowed to finish. Others took

up the argument, and Walter finally ended the song, though amid some confusion.

But the verdict at the last, given with much solemn shaking of the heads, fell like lead upon Walter's hopes.

"Outsung and outdone!" they said.

So Walter was denied membership in the guild, and the chance of winning Eva's hand seemed slim indeed.

The only member who had been friendly to the young knight was Hans Sachs. This jolly cobbler lived just across the street from the goldsmith—his modest shop standing in sharp contrast to Herr Pogner's stately mansion.

That same evening while David the apprentice was keeping shop during his master's absence, a woman came cautiously out of the side gate of the mansion with a basket on her arm, and approached him.

"Good-evening, David," she said.

"Good-evening, Lena," he answered, for it was Magdalen the maid. "What have you got in your basket?"

"Look and see," she said, tipping the lid.

What he saw made his eyes grow large. There were cookies and doughnuts and pretzels so tempting that he at once forgot his own late supper.

"Who are they for?" he asked.

"Let me ask you a question first. How did it go with the young knight to-day?"

"Why, marry, he was declared outdone and outsung."

"Are you sure? Didn't you help him and teach him the rules as I told you to?"

"Marry, that did I. But he didn't sing my way and the judges—"

"A plague upon you and the judges!" exclaimed the maid much disturbed. "I will just take my cookies back home." And away she flounced, leaving David staring open-mouthed at the vanishing dainties.

Some other 'prentices who had been hiding behind the corner no sooner saw David's discomfiture than they raised a shout and began to make all manner of fun at his expense. They were a merry lot of rogues—these 'prentices—and lost no chance when their masters' backs were turned to get into mischief. Now as they began to dance around David he lost his temper and, willing to vent his rage upon some one, he fell to fighting the whole crowd. The noise was becoming uproarious when suddenly a stout man with ruddy cheeks strode briskly round the corner.

"Here you boys!" he shouted. "Be off home, every mother's son of you! And David, if I catch

you fighting out here in the street again, you will have to hunt other shoes to cobble."

"They began it, sir!" whined David, while the other boys lost no time in taking to their heels.

"That makes no difference," said Hans Sachs. "Get in with you, and help me finish those shoes for Herr Beckmesser."

David scratched his head ruefully, but obeyed his master; and soon the light streamed out from the little shop, and the cobbler's lusty blows were heard along the street, keeping time to a song of his own making.

Across the way there was one heart that was much cast down. Eva had learned from Magdalen the result of Walter's trial, and so she now approached her father in regard to the next day's festival. She did not, of course, mention the knight's name, but she asked about those who were to sing, and timidly suggested that perhaps she need not marry a Master Singer after all, if he did not suit either of them. But her father seemed more determined than ever, though he could not help wondering secretly, if she had heard about the young knight.

As she left her father, Eva heard the cobbler pounding away, and so she determined to find out if he knew anything about the contest. Hans Sachs had just dismissed his apprentice for the night when Eva tripped lightly to the door and looked in.

"A good-evening to you, old Peg-at-work," said she saucily.'

"Why, 'tis my little Eva!" he exclaimed, his broad face smiling a welcome; for she was a special pet of his.

"What makes you work so—pound, pound, pound!—so that your neighbours cannot sleep?"

"I am finishing two pairs of shoes: one for your little feet to wear to-morrow at the festival; and the other for the worthy Sixtus Beckmesser who aspires to outsing us all."

"Oh, he can't do that, you know!" said Eva, laughing, but tossing her head uneasily. "Before we'd let him do that, you and I, why I would get you to mount the stump and outsing him. And then just think what a nice old husband you would be!"

Hans Sachs laughed heartily at her banter. He had known her all her life and was used to her ways by now. But he decided to set a trap and find out just where her affections lay.

"You have already had one narrow escape to-day," he said shrewdly. "There was a likely-looking young gallant up before the guild trying to sing. His name was Walter something-or-other, and he wanted to enter the contest to-morrow. But bless you! he couldn't sing—and it's a good thing for you that he couldn't. I'll warrant he's an idle

fellow that will never amount to a side of sole-leather!"

"What do you know about him?" burst forth Eva indignantly. "I'll warrant your stupid crowd never gave him half a chance to sing. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!"

But just then she caught sight of the broad grin upon the cobbler's face and realised she was betraying herself. Her cheeks reddened, and she turned and fled across the street, while Hans Sachs chuckled in great glee over the success of his scheme.

This was not the only game the shoemaker played that evening, as you shall presently see. For just then Walter came along the street looking for Eva. He had found opportunity to send word through Magdalen that he was coming, so Eva was on the lookout for him. But fearful lest her father should see her leaving the house, she had changed dresses with her maid; and it was as Magdalen that she now hastened out to join her lover.

But Hans Sachs' keen eyes, right across the way, were not to be deceived. He recognised both the young people at once; and as they drew under the shade of a linden tree that grew near his door, he was able to hear most of their words. He heard Walter tell Eva of his ill success that day, and how he would not be able to compete on the morrow because of a lot of musty old rules. Walter, in fact,

was in despair and he now proposed the only way out that seemed possible to him.

"You must go away with me, dear Eva, this very night," he urged. "We will get the good minister on the farther side of the town to marry us, and I have horses and coach in waiting. By the time the sun rises on that contest we will be miles away from Nuremberg and nearing my old home in Franconia. Will you not come?"

Eva hesitated. She loved her father and did not want to bring him sorrow. But then that odious Beckmesser, or some other man who might become Master Singer!—Yes, she would go to the ends of the world with her dear Walter, she said.

Hans Sachs shook his head when he heard this. These foolish children must be held in check. So he arose and made as though he were opening the shutter of his door, at the same time setting his lamp in such a way that it threw a broad beam of light across the street. Walter and Eva would have to cross the lighted space, and this he knew they would not attempt, lest they should be seen.

The cobbler was unexpectedly aided in his ruse by the appearance of Beckmesser. The town clerk had decided to serenade Eva in the most approved style, by way of proving his devotion and also showing what he could do on the morrow.

While the two young people crouched still farther

behind the tree, Beckmesser struck his harp vigorously and cleared his throat with a loud ahem! preparatory to launching forth upon his ditty. But before he could get started, Hans Sachs began pounding again upon his last, whack, whack, whack! to the tune of a hearty cobbling-song.

"By all the powers!" groaned the clerk disgustedly. Then he called to the shoemaker, "Here, you, Hans Sachs! Don't you know you are disturbing the peace? Why don't you do all your work in the daytime?"

"Oh, I'm just working a little to-night to finish up that pair of shoes you were so anxious to have to-morrow," retorted Hans Sachs; "and I always sing at my work. It makes it go better."

Thereupon he began in a louder voice than ever.

Beckmesser was at his wits' end. He had sent word to Eva that he was coming to serenade her. Now he was afraid, in his conceit, that she would mistake the cobbler's song for his own. Just then Magdalen appeared at an upper window in Eva's dress. Beckmesser waved frantically to her and threw a kiss. Then he turned to the cobbler.

"I'll tell you what, Hans Sachs, you needn't mind about those shoes, to-morrow. I'm afraid the neighbours will make complaint against you."

"No, indeed," replied the cobbler, "they don't mind about my singing. They say it soothes them."

"Well, speaking of singing," persisted the clerk, "perhaps you would like to hear my new song that I have just composed and intend to sing to-morrow. Shall I go over it for you?"

"On one condition, and that is, to allow me to make note of every error by tapping upon my shoes. Thus I can criticise you and get my work done at the same time."

"Agreed," said the clerk, and began his song. But he was so nervous and irritated that his mistakes became more and more frequent. The cobbler's taps became hammering, and the hammering a constant clattering, while Beckmesser tried in vain to sing against the noise. Finally the uproar became so loud that windows were opened all along the street to see what was the trouble.

David was one of the first ones to look out upon the scene. His jealous eyes saw Beckmesser singing or rather shouting toward the window where Magdalen stood, and his rage was kindled in an instant. Springing from the window to the ground he seized the unlucky clerk and began to beat him soundly with a cudgel. The other apprentices, always ready for a fight, came rushing forth and, taking sides, joined in a general fisticuff.

Walter and Eva tried to take advantage of the tumult to effect their escape, but Hans Sachs was too quick for them. Pretending to mistake Eva

for Magdalen he thrust her toward her own home, whose door was just then opened, and Herr Pogner, crying, "Lena!" pulled her within and closed the door. At the same moment, Hans Sachs dragged Walter into his own shop just as the sound of the approaching night-watch was heard. As if by magic the street was cleared of brawlers, and when the watchman sang in a sonorous voice, "Ten o'clock and all's well!" there was nothing in sight to dispute his assertion.

The morning of the festival dawned clear and bright. The friendly sun streaming through the open door into the cobbler's shop seemed to give promise of a perfect day. The cobbler was up early for he had a good many singing rules to look over before the time of the contest. While he was busily turning over the pages of a huge book David came sneaking in bearing a basket which looked suspiciously like the one his Lena had carried the evening before. Seating himself in a distant corner he began to busy himself with its contents, all the while watching his master with furtive glances. But Sachs was so intent upon his book that he paid no heed to his apprentice. This also made David uncomfortable. He thought his master was angry with him for the brawling of the night before; so he now tried to make his peace by offering some of

the dainties to the cobbler. They were good-naturedly refused, Hans Sachs telling the young man to keep them for himself to eat at the festival. Then after hearing him sing his morning song, David was given his freedom for the day and joyfully departed.

Presently another person entered the shop, and this time the shoemaker looked up quickly.

"Why good-morrow, Sir Walter. Did you sleep well?" he asked kindly.

"Aye, what sleep I had was good, and thank you," replied the knight. "How was it with you?"

"Oh, so, so! There were so many serenades and lovers' meetings, the early part of the evening, that I lost some of my rest—but not enough to hurt."

The young knight smiled at his banter, then remarked:

"I had a marvellous sweet dream."

"Pray tell it to me."

"I am not able to do that, for it came to me as a song."

"Then sing it," urged the cobbler.

"What is the good of my singing?" replied Walter moodily. " 'Tis not for me to sing upon this day above all others when my song might have been of some service."

"Tut, tut, my friend," said Hans Sachs. "You

must not take things so hardly. We may yet find some way of making one of your songs count. Now do you sing me this one and I will mark down the errors in it, and show you why they are errors. Thus you will soon learn, perchance, how to sing a Master Song."

"But that soon will be too late."

"Come let us have the song."

So while the cobbler took paper and pen and prepared to set down the words as well as the mistakes, Walter began to sing:

"The morning dawned with rosy light;
The scented air—
With flowers rare—
A vision of beauty rose to my sight;
A garden a-gleam
This was my dream!"

"Good, good!" said Hans Sachs heartily. "That is all right. Now you must be careful to have the next stanza just like that; the same number of measures and beats."

Walter began again:

"There in the garden stood a tree,
A wondrous sight
Of rich delight:
Its boughs full-fruited, wide and free,
All golden did seem
In this my dream!"

"Upon my word!" cried the cobbler delightedly. "You have got the beginning of a rare good song there! And it conforms to all the rules! Now if you will complete it as well as you have begun it, and be careful to keep the measures just as I have set them down, you will win the next contest you try."

"But I have forgotten the rest of my dream," said Walter.

"Never mind. Perhaps it will come to you later," replied the cobbler. "You have made a fine start." And giving him a few other suggestions, he then bade his guest come into the living-rooms and don some festival finery. Walter obeyed, though he felt anything but merry over the occasion.

While they were absent from the room, who should come in but Beckmesser. His vanity had led him to come after his new shoes, if perchance they were ready; and now seeing that the shop was empty he began to prowl about to see what he might discover. Soon his eye lighted upon the fresh copy of verses which Hans Sachs had left behind on the cobbler's bench. He read them, saw their value, and decided to pocket them to use for himself. But the cobbler returning just then upset him somewhat, and he resolved to brazen it out.

"I thought you said you were not going to take

part in the contest," said the clerk blusteringly.

"I meant it. I am not," replied Hans Sachs quietly.

"But I have proof that you are."

"What proof?"

"Why, this poem I have found on your bench."

"Hum. Then how did it get into your pocket?"

"That doesn't matter. You were intending to use it against me," sputtered Beckmesser, growing more and more red in the face.

"No, I wasn't going to use it against you. I repeat, I am not going to sing."

Beckmesser looked at him a moment in a sly way and then suddenly began to wheedle.

"You and I have always been good friends, Herr Sachs. I pray you to forgive me if I said anything hasty. I expect I shall need a good many shoes this winter. Now have you any objection to my using this song?"

"No, I haven't any objection," replied Hans Sachs with a smile.

"And you won't claim it as yours?"

"No, I won't claim it as mine."

"You are a good-hearted friend!" cried the clerk, fairly hugging him in his delight, and then capering out of the door with his verses.

"And you are an evil-hearted fool!" said Sachs, looking after him. "But the pit you fall into will be of your own digging."

The cobbler knew that the clerk would never be able to find the right tune to fit the words, and that he was liable to forget even the words. So he felt no uneasiness when Beckmesser took them away with him.

The next visitor to his workshop was Eva, looking very winsome in her festival attire of white. She had come over to see what had become of Walter, though she had made another excuse for her errand.

"Herr Sachs," she said, answering his jovial greeting, "I came over to see what was the matter with one of these shoes you finished for me last night. It does not feel comfortable."

She placed one small foot upon a rest, and the cobbler knelt to see what was the matter. But he did not discover it until Walter, dressed in the rich garb of a knight, entered the room.

"Ah, *that* is where the shoe pinches!" he exclaimed quietly; and willing to allow the young people a few minutes to themselves he took off the shoe and went chuckling to his last, where he began to hammer furiously. But seeing that the two others were rather shy in his presence he paused and looked up.

"Mistress Eve," he said, "I take back what I said about this young man not being able to sing. He sang me a fine song awhile ago, but the last part

was lacking. Perhaps he will sing it for you through to the end."

Thus encouraged and looking Eva in the face Walter began his song again. He sang the first two stanzas just as the cobbler had set them down; then gaining inspiration from his sweetheart's presence he added a beautiful third part filled with the hopes of love and desires of fame:—

"Lingered the stars in dance of delight
And rested there
Upon the hair
Of a maiden lovely, star-bedight!
The light of day
Had twofold ray—

"Her eyes—bright suns—on me shone down
With splendour sweet.
In bliss complete
I saw her take her heavenly crown—
Both Fame and Love
Came from above!
Ah, blest was I with joy extreme
In Love's sweet dream!"

"Hark, child!" exclaimed Sachs to Eva, who had been listening as if enchanted. "That is a true Master Song! Come, put on your shoe! Doesn't it feel better? You don't hear songs like that every day, even in Nuremberg!"

But Eva was so overcome with her emotions that

she leaned her head upon the good shoemaker's shoulder and burst into tears.

"Tut, tut!" said he. "You know that the song wasn't as bad as all that! And as for you, master poet, rest easy about the contest! Just put yourself in my hands and we will see if we cannot still show the guild a few points about singing. Hark you, David!" (to his apprentice who had entered while the song was in progress) "bear witness with us that this is an original song belonging to Sir Walter and to none other. But you cannot bear witness, being an apprentice; so I herewith make you a journeyman!"

He accompanied these words with a sound slap on the ear, which was the quaint custom of releasing apprentices, and David overjoyed thanked him and hopped first on one foot and then on the other across the street to tell Lena his good fortune.

We will now leave the shoemaker's shop, where so many things have happened, and go with the throng of merrymakers to a broad grassy meadow lying just outside of Nuremberg. The whole town seems to be wending its way there, the 'prentices and their lasses, ribbon-decked, dancing on ahead, the burghers and their wives walking more sedately in the rear. These annual festivals were in fact noted for miles around; and the news of Herr Pog-

ner's offer on the present event was bringing record-breaking crowds.

Before the singing began, a dance was held upon the green. In and out the merry parties weaved in May-pole fashion until a cry arose, "The Master Singers! the Master Singers!" and everybody fell back respectfully to make way for the members of the guild. Two by two they filed in, looking very important and taking seats reserved for them upon a stage.

Last of all came Herr Pogner, with his daughter leaning upon his arm, and Hans Sachs and Walter. You may be sure there were many curious glances directed toward the white-robed girl whose hand had been promised to the victor of the day, but she bore the ordeal bravely, albeit blushingly. The handsome knight walking along with the shoemaker also came in for his share of attention, and "Who can he be?" was on many lips, especially those of the maidens.

Hans Sachs was Master of Ceremonies for the day. He was one of the most widely beloved men in all Nuremberg town; so a hearty cheer went up as he came to the front of the platform to address the throng. In a neat little speech he told the purpose of the festival and spoke of the high regard in which the occasion had been held in the past. He spoke of the conditions governing the contest,

and of the unusual prize offered by his esteemed fellow-townsman and neighbour to the victor of the day. At this there was still louder cheering by the crowd and still more blushing on the part of Eva. When the applause subsided, the speaker concluded his remarks by saying that the contest was now open to any one, and the first singer to present himself would be listened to.

As Hans Sachs ceased speaking, and the final applause ended, there was a tremendous craning of necks to see who would be the first candidate. With a bow and a smirk, Beckmesser lost no time in coming forward. He was dressed with fantastic care, and as he clambered painfully up the steps to the singer's platform, people nudged one another and smiled. One pert young girl said to another, "What! that old fool?" and the other replied, "Wonder what his first wife would think of his capers?"

However, the town clerk did not hear any of these and other comments, but began thrumming the harp he carried, by way of a prelude. Then he lifted up his voice and sang—and such singing! He had tried at the last moment to adapt a tune of his own to Walter's poem. The tune did not suit the words, and moreover he had not had time to memorise them well—just as the shrewd cobbler had anticipated. He stumbled in the lines and

tried to refresh his memory by looking slyly at the written copy he held in his harp hand. The result was a strange jumble of poem, song, and sense. So ludicrous was the ending that the people did not try to keep within bounds, but laughed aloud right in the unlucky singer's face.

Beckmesser was filled with shame and rage at the way his song had ended. Willing to put the blame upon some one else if he could, he threw the paper at Sachs' feet exclaiming:

"Well, at any rate, it was not *my* song! There is the man you have been ridiculing—your dear Hans Sachs!"

The cobbler arose and quietly picked up the paper.

"No," he said, "this song is none of mine."

"Do you deny," raged the other, "that it is your writing and I found it in your workshop?"

"I do not deny it, but, as I told you, I will not claim it as mine; for it is not."

Then seeing that the people, as well as Beckmesser, were interested in what he had to say, he turned to them and told them the true history of the song—how that a young knight had composed and sung it to him only that morning. He had merely written down the words which had later been seized upon by Beckmesser, who had now tried to fit them to a tune of his own.

Beckmesser interrupted him here. He saw that he himself was standing upon very thin ice and it behooved him to bluster it out.

"A pretty story this!" he cried. "The young knight of whom he speaks was publicly discredited before all our guild only yesterday. *He* does not know how to write such a song as I have sung!"

"Thank Heaven that he doesn't!" retorted Sachs, amid general laughter. In a moment he continued, "Now I crave the indulgence of every one here present. You have known me to be just with every man. All I ask of you is to be allowed to prove what I say. The true owner of this song is present here to-day and desires to sing it in the contest. Then you shall be the judge as to whether it be his or Beckmesser's."

"Yes, yes; let him come forward!" came an answering shout.

Hans Sachs turned and looked inquiringly at the members of the guild. They likewise nodded approval. Indeed, they would hardly have dared do otherwise, even if they had been so disposed, in the face of the popular desire. Then the Master of Ceremonies beckoned to Walter, and every eye was fastened upon him while he rose, bowed gracefully and walked toward the stage. As for Beckmesser he took advantage of the moment to slink away without waiting for his rival, and he was not seen again that day!

Before Walter began his song, Hans Sachs gave the paper to members upon the stage.

"Masters," he said, "I pray you note well this song—errors and all—and see if it be not indeed a Master Song!"

During the most intense silence Walter opened his lips and began the refrain of the morning. The first two stanzas were sung even more sweetly than he had sung them before, while the third and fourth—not even known to the clerk—proved a marvellously fitting close. As the last notes of the harp died away to the thrill of his rich voice the audience, masters, burghers, 'prentices and all, stood for a moment spellbound. Then like the crashing of a mighty wave upon the shore the applause broke. They shouted, they cried, they clapped their hands, they flung their hats into the air—even the most sedate of them—while their joy seemed to know no bounds.

For the Master Song had been sung! the event to this music-loving people would go down into history.

When order was in some measure restored Hans Sachs asked if there was another contestant. (He did not need to ask the verdict on the song.) No one else presented himself; and Herr Pogner walking forward publicly declared Walter von Stolzen a Master Singer and made him a member of the guild of Nuremberg.

"Personally, I am proud and delighted to welcome you among us and proclaim you victor," he said, genially, "and as to my daughter's hand, I leave you to plead your cause with her. If she proves intractable—sing to her. That will win her if anything!"

"I have already sung to her, and await my answer," said Walter clearly.

Her face radiant with rose-colour, which but set off the sparkling light in her eyes, Eva approached her knight and placed the laurel wreath upon his head, as he knelt there on the step before her.

And the people? Once again they fairly eclipsed all their previous efforts at applauding. Finally it ended in a spontaneous note of admiration and love for Hans Sachs who had found this rare singer for them, and made all things come about as they should.

"Hail, Sachs! Hans Sachs! Hail, Nuremberg's beloved Sachs!" they cried.

And Eva and Walter, listening with tears of joy, felt that all this sea of sound could not express a hundredth part of the gratitude which welled up in their two happy hearts.

Rienzi the Last of the Tribunes

(*Rienzi*)

IN the days of Rome's early greatness there were leaders chosen by the people who were called Tribunes. These Tribunes, though subject to the popular will, often had vast power, for they could make laws, declare war, and do other things that few kings, even, have had power to do. But the Tribunes passed away, in the course of centuries, and after the mighty Roman Empire had fallen, the people often had no real governing head. They were the prey of strong enemies without, and of fierce quarrels within. So, you may believe, their lot was not happy, nor their state prosperous.

About the middle of the fourteenth century, Rome had fallen into the hands of several nobles, or barons, who fought among themselves and cared no whit for the rights of the common people. Chief among these barons were the rival houses of Orsini and Colonna. Each maintained strong retinues of armed men and lived in fortified castles; and as there was no real government to hold them in check they became a menace to the whole city.

Shopkeepers hardly dared to open their places in broad daylight, lest they should be robbed. Merchants were afraid to send goods from one place to another, lest they should be seized. And the worst was that women and little children were in continual danger from the street brawls and sudden excursions of these cruel and lawless men.

So you may see how desperate was the condition of things at Rome and how sadly they needed some one to restore peace and safety. Even the authority of the Pope was disregarded, and he had to flee for protection to the city of Avignon.

But there was one young man, risen from the ranks of the people, who as he grew up was filled with noble ambition. He saw the distress of all his fellow-townsmen and he longed to avenge their wrongs and make the city free and prosperous as it was in the olden days. This desire was finally roused to a fever heat by a sad accident which happened within his own family. His little brother, a beautiful child with curly hair and engaging ways, was playing one day in the open street when a small company of soldiers belonging to the Orsini house dashed by. They were met by others of the Colonna faction, and in one of their usual fierce fights the little boy was slain. Yet the young lord who had chanced to do this dreadful thing rode away without a word of regret.

From that time forth Rienzi—for that was the name of the people's champion—worked constantly among the people, striving to rouse them to action. His fiery eloquence, his earnestness, and the justice of the cause, brought him a constantly increasing band of followers, until at last he had practically all the common people secretly enlisted under his banner and only awaiting the signal to rise against the barons and regain their liberties. And the people loved their enthusiastic young leader. They were willing to follow him anywhere and give him any title he might see fit to assume. But he chose the simple name of "Tribune" in memory of the former Tribunes who had led the people; and his earnest prayer was that he might prove worthy of it.

After the tragic death of his brother, Rienzi's affections centred in a sister, Irene, a fair young girl just reaching womanhood, who was no less devoted to her brother than he to her. A fine picture they made, sauntering along some quiet path together, he with his dark hair and dreamy eyes, she with her light hair and smile like an imprisoned sunbeam. Rienzi, indeed, was a dreamer and would have liked nothing better than his books or a stroll like this by the side of a stream, had not the stern call of his country roused him to heroic things. But the fine stuff that dreamers are made

of—a trusting confidence in all men—was the one thing which unsuited him for leadership. This, however, you will see for yourself as we go on with our story.

While Irene was strolling along one day, she had the misfortune to attract the notice of one of the Orsini noblemen. He fell in love with her, but, knowing that she would scorn him, he did not attempt to win her in an honourable way. Instead, he planned to carry her away by force from the shelter of her own home! This was a wicked and audacious thing to do; but the fact that such plots had actually succeeded before shows how dreadful were the times when Rienzi lived.

Accordingly, one dark night, an armed band stole quietly along under the shadow of the houses until they reached the one where dwelt Rienzi and his sister Irene. They were wise enough to choose a night when Rienzi was absent addressing the people, so Irene was left alone and helpless. Quickly placing their scaling-ladders to the windows of the house, they soon broke into it and seized the poor girl. Despite her frantic outcries and appeals for help, they were on the point of carrying her down the ladder and making good their escape, when a lucky intervention occurred. A young man bearing the arms of Colonna dashed up with a band of followers. Seeing his ancient foes, he lost no time

in attacking them at the foot of the ladders. The Orsini, though taken by surprise, fought stoutly, and the noise of the conflict brought many people running to the scene. But meanwhile the leader of the Colonna forces found means to rescue the fainting girl and carry her to one side to a place of safety.

Among those whom the tumult attracted was the Papal Legate. He came into the midst of the throng and besought them to cease fighting in the name of religion and of the church, since they paid no heed to the law. But the nobles laughed at him, and would probably have resumed the fight, had not a commanding voice cried out, "Hold!"

It was Rienzi, who had just come. Addressing the people, who were his followers, he bade them respect the law; while he prayed the barons also to go quietly to their homes. The people cheered his words and drew back. The barons shrugged their shoulders at this champion of the people, and were fain to continue hostilities, but the company about Rienzi was now so large that they yielded and sheathed their weapons. But they agreed among themselves to meet on the morrow outside the city gates, where they could renew the contest without interruption.

No sooner had the barons withdrawn than Rienzi's followers began to urge him to do what

he had so long been planning—strike a decisive blow against the barons and make the city free. Rienzi saw that this would be a good opportunity. He had heard the barons plan to withdraw outside the city. Now, when they went forth to fight on the morrow, why not close the gates against them, and not let them in again until they had sworn to obey the laws?

So Rienzi was only too willing to fall in with the popular suggestion, for he perceived that the temper of the people was with him. In an impassioned speech he begged them to uphold him now; to strike as one man for the freedom of the ancient city. Then he unfolded his plan to them. The next morning his banner should be unfurled and his trumpet should sound. Then let every man there present, and every neighbour of his, rally to the standard of liberty and peace!

Rienzi's speech was wildly applauded, and a unanimous support was pledged him. The crowd then dispersed, and Rienzi had opportunity, for the first time, to learn the cause of the tumult. He found that the girl who had been rescued was his own sister. She had recovered from her fainting fit and was now leaning against her doorstep, where she was being tenderly watched over by a young man.

"Irene! Adrian!" exclaimed Rienzi in alarm.

"All is well, dear brother," replied the girl. "But had it not been for this chivalrous stranger, I fear it would have been terribly different. Some men of Orsini invaded our home and tried to carry me away, when this gentleman interfered. Our thanks are due to him."

"And they are given in overflowing measure, Adrian," said Rienzi, extending his hand to the nobleman. "We owe you much."

Adrian of Colonna, in fact, was a boyhood friend of Rienzi, though public matters and a difference in station had long kept them apart. The nobleman flushed and laughed, declaring that the service was nothing. He was afraid indeed, he said, that the sight of his enemy moved him to battle before ever he saw there was a lovely maiden in distress. Here he laid his hand upon his heart and bowed gallantly.

Meanwhile, Rienzi was troubled at heart. Realising that Adrian had heard his speech and therefore knew his plans, he feared the cause was undone. He swiftly decided to throw himself upon the generosity of the nobleman, whom he knew to be highly honourable, and he therefore asked him, for old friendship's sake, not to reveal anything he had heard that night.

Adrian at first hesitated. One word from him would put the barons—who had laughed at Rienzi's

pretensions and did not suspect his strength—on their guard. What should he do?

Rienzi saw his hesitancy. "It is not alone for myself or my people that I ask it," he pleaded; "it is for Rome—the place of our fathers for generation upon generation. Let us restore the old government and the old glory to our country. Let its cause plead with you!"

"And let me also add my word of entreaty," said Irene timidly. "You have done so much for us already. Can we ask this one thing more?"

"I consent!" said the young man impetuously. "For my country—and for you!"

Irene blushed and her eyes could not conceal the little ray of pleasure that came into them. The young nobleman saw the gleam and his heart beat with a strange thrill, such as he had never known before. It seemed to him in a moment that he would give all he possessed—houses and lands and titles—if he could but call up that glance at his every coming.

The next morning the whole city was early astir. The barons and their adherents had withdrawn to a plain outside the walls as they had agreed. Rienzi and his followers meanwhile were busied with warlike preparations. Armed men ran hither and thither about the streets greeting other citi-

zens. And it was seen that whenever a shopkeeper or craftsman was approached, he straightway forsook whatever he was doing and hastened to arm himself also and fall in line.

When the sun was well up in the heavens the sound of a trumpet was heard. It blew the call of Rienzi; and straightway through the streets came the steady tread of marching feet. At the head of a large body of determined-looking men rode Rienzi, clad in the glittering armour of a Tribune. Before the great square of the Capitol he turned and addressed the populace telling them to be valiant upon this day and stand for the honour and freedom of their beloved city and for their own security. Then giving orders, he posted men at the gates and upon the walls, where they awaited the return of the barons.

It was really an easy victory. For when the barons came back wearied and weakened by the fighting among themselves, they found the gates so securely barred and the walls so strongly defended that they were forced to make terms. They agreed to respect the laws and recognise Rienzi as Tribune, before ever they were allowed to enter or continue to their homes.

You may be sure this defeat sat ill with the haughty lords who had despised the common people and sneered at their champion. But they saw

At the head of a large body of men rode Rienzi

it would not do to employ force, as they were greatly outnumbered. So they decided to plot secretly against the Tribune while outwardly they bowed to his authority.

Accordingly when Rienzi held his first public audience, a few days later, in the audience-chamber of the Capitol, the barons were present, as well as ambassadors from foreign courts and many other dignitaries. It was an imposing assemblage worthy of a king. Messengers were despatched hither and thither with orders. Pages stood in waiting. Heralds announced each person who had business with the Tribune. Couriers, dust-covered, strode in to bring good news: one reported that the brigands had been suppressed; another, that all the roads were safe; another, that peace was an assured fact in all the country round about, and people were blessing the new Tribune's rule.

This news was received with great joy by all the court, with the exception of the barons. They saw in it a death-blow to their own power, and knew that so long as the Tribune held sway, the people would be more than a match for them. So they resolved to lose no time in putting Rienzi to death. That very day they met together—putting aside their own animosities for the time being—and laid their plans. Adrian who was present indignantly upbraided them, telling them they were breaking

their word; but he was not heeded. Instead, his own father, who was head of the house of Colonna, asked him if he were going to turn against them, his own flesh and blood. Hot words rushed to Adrian's lips. He was on the point of replying that his country's welfare came first; but the barons did not pause to listen. They went in search of Rienzi, each with a dagger under his cloak.

Rienzi had been addressing the people from a gallery in the Capitol, when of a sudden Adrian ran swiftly from behind a row of pillars and whispered to him,

"Be on your guard! There are those who seek your life!" Then he darted away.

He did not have time to say more, for the group of conspirators were even then drawing near. They surrounded Rienzi under pretence of asking him some question with regard to the new government. Then quickly they drew their daggers and each one struck him in turn.

But the Tribune had been too vigilant for them. Suspecting treachery on their part he had taken the precaution to don a coat of mail, under his robe of state, and this turned aside all their blows.

Those below who had seen their dastardly attack cried aloud for vengeance.

"Seize them! Kill them! Murderers! Villains!" resounded on all sides; and in a moment the

gallery was thronged with excited men, led by Cecco a burly blacksmith, and the conspirators were disarmed and bound. They were thrown into separate dungeons, and so fierce was the rage against them that they were glad to hear the heavy doors clang, for they had been afraid of being torn to pieces.

As it was, their hours seemed numbered, for the people surged about the chair of state whereon Rienzi had now taken his seat, and clamoured loudly for the execution of the barons. Rienzi also was justly indignant. He did not care so much for the attack made against his own person as for the barons' total want of honour and disregard of the state's welfare. He saw that they were working for their own interests to the ruin of every one else, and that the people's new-found liberty would be safer if they were put to death. So he was about to yield to the popular clamour and sign their death warrant when Adrian and Irene entered.

The young nobleman had realised the serious danger threatening his father and the other barons when their attack failed. Wishing to save his kindred and friends, although he knew they deserved punishment, he had hastened in search of Irene and begged her to plead with her brother for the prisoners' lives. This the tender-hearted girl consented to do; and they now came to present the

petition together. Falling on their knees before Rienzi they begged him to show mercy rather than justice and prove the greatness of his high office.

This was just the sort of petition that appealed to the high-souled Tribune. He impulsively tore up the sentence which he was about to sign, and calling the people together he addressed them again with that eloquence of which he was so great a master. He asked to be allowed to pardon the barons, as it was him only that they had attacked. The people gave their consent, though not without murmurs, and the prisoners were then summoned to the throne-room.

Rienzi received them in state, and for once they were cowed into submission. Indeed, they expected nothing less than sentence of death; and if any of them had been in Rienzi's place he would have lost no time in pronouncing this sentence. But as we have before seen, the chief fault of Rienzi was too great faith in the promises of other men. Now it led him into the great mistake of his life. To the utter surprise of the prisoners, the Tribune addressed them in words of kindness and pardon.

"Friends," he said quietly, "I have been deeply grieved by the outbreak for which ye are now in chains. As concerns my own life, I care not a straw. I will gladly offer it up at any moment for the good of my country. But in your late attack

I cannot but see that ye were aiming at my country rather than me. Ye were violating your words. Ye were breaking the laws. If I regarded only the justice of the case and the requests of my people, I should order you to immediate execution; for this ye have deserved. But the teachings of holy church are that we shall temper our deeds with mercy. I have therefore asked the people, whom ye have offended, to forgive you for my sake. This they will do if ye renew your allegiance,—promising solemnly upon your honour as gentlemen and Christians to respect the laws of the people and my authority as their representative."

During this speech the barons looked at one another in doubt and amazement. Never had they heard its like. Their whole lives had been spent under the principle of "kill or be killed," and the nobility of this young dreamer struck no responsive note in their own breasts. But when he ended his speech of pardon with the condition that they take a new oath of allegiance, they saw it was their only hope of escape. And so they all promised, though sullenly and reluctantly, and each one resolved in his heart to pay no heed to a promise wrung from him by force of circumstances.

Thus you see the Tribune's good deed brought forth no good fruit—only evil; for as the prisoners were set free, their faces wore such heavy scowls

and their teeth set so savagely that the people were filled with foreboding and for the first time began to doubt the wisdom of their ruler.

The citizens had good cause to be alarmed. That very night the barons secretly fled from the city, and the next day reports reached the market-place that they were collecting a large army in the provinces and would soon march against Rienzi to crush him. The reports were soon confirmed and grew more portentous day by day. The people became terrified and openly reproached the Tribune for his lack of foresight. Yet they still clung to him as their leader, and implored him to save them from their enemies.

Rienzi went about with calm and cheerful countenance. His very presence inspired confidence, and his speeches brought the people flocking to his standard and ready to shed their last drop of blood in the beloved cause.

But there was one, in this troublous time, whose heart was torn with conflicting emotions. Poor Adrian did not know which way to turn. Loyalty to his kindred and father's house demanded that he side with the barons. A new-found devotion to his country and belief in Rienzi urged him to support the people. And in addition he had become deeply in love with the gentle Irene and felt that she responded to his devotion. It was indeed a heart-

breaking situation for him and one that seemed more hopeless as the days of battle grew imminent.

Finally the barons' army drew proudly on the city, and halting before the gates demanded its instant surrender. The wardens shouted back defiance, while from within came the sound of singing and marching men. Rienzi's forces approached the gates with resolute step keeping time to a sonorous war-chant. At their head rode the Tribune, his dark eyes flashing with the light of conflict. But before he could give orders to throw open the gates and meet the enemy on open ground, Adrian sprang forward and cast himself before Rienzi's charger.

"Halt! I beseech you, O Tribune!" he cried, while the steed reared and its rider drew in the reins sharply.

"What is the cause of this?" demanded Rienzi sternly.

"Let me plead with the barons once more!" begged Adrian. "Perchance they will listen to me, and there will be no need of bloodshed. Ah, let us have an armistice!"

"It is too late," replied the Tribune. "They have shown us that we can put no faith in speeches. Stand aside! What ho, wardens! Open the gates, and let us give these rebels all the fighting they desire!"

And so they did! While the unfortunate Adrian

was brushed aside, the gates were unbarred and the two armies rushed together in the shock of battle. Rome the ancient seat of many fierce struggles never saw one more fierce or deadly than this. The barons were spurred on by hatred and greed. The people were fighting for their liberties. And here and there and everywhere the black horse of Rienzi was seen, bearing his triumphant rider into the thickest of the fray. Rienzi's plume waving above his dark hair was the signal of victory. Rienzi's clear voice was encouragement and conquest.

Finally after fearful slaughter the barons broke and fled. The Tribune had once again defeated them. Among the heaps of slain was Adrian's father, the head of the house of Colonna. While the victorious citizens buried the dead, they sang praises to their leader, whom they idolised more than ever. And it did indeed seem that a bright day had dawned for Rome.

But though the barons were defeated and dispersed, they had by no means given up the struggle. They now tried by underhand means to gain their ends. The Emperor of Germany had for some time asserted sovereignty, in nominal fashion, over Rome. To him the barons now appealed saying that the city was in the hands of a dangerous rebel. They also visited the Pope at Avignon and artfully

persuaded him that Rienzi was a dangerous heretic who openly scoffed at all authority. Though the Pope had formerly felt compelled to flee from Rome because of the barons, he now listened to their speeches and, strange to say, fell in with their plans. The Emperor also sent orders that his ambassadors were to be recalled.

This news, reaching Rome, caused a new upheaval in the minds of the fickle people. Many were ready, without delay, to turn against the man they had been worshipping. Their emotions were still further worked upon by some designing demagogues, one being Cecco, the blacksmith we have before noticed. Cecco and his band thought they could push themselves to power in this general disturbance, and they lost no chance of poisoning the ears of the crowd.

Finally, a new leader appeared. It was none other than Adrian, who, frantic with grief over the death of his father, now publicly announced that he had vowed to slay Rienzi, and called upon the people to help him to put down the usurper and tyrant. And soon the cry arose in this street and that, "Down with Rienzi!" For the people had forgotten—as people will forget.

But still there were others who argued stoutly for the Tribune's cause, so that words ran high and many citizens did not know what to believe.

In the midst of the disturbance the great bell of the cathedral rang out calling the people to worship. A public service of thanksgiving had been announced in celebration of the great victory; and presently the Papal Legate and all his train appeared going to the service. This made the crowd still more doubtful in their beliefs, though public sentiment began to veer again toward Rienzi.

"See!" they said, "the Pope himself is helping to celebrate the victory. Then surely he has not withdrawn his favour from Rienzi!"

Just then Rienzi himself appeared, leading his sister by the hand and proceeding with firm step to the cathedral. Adrian was among the throng who saw him pass; but though Adrian had vowed to slay him, and there were many in the press who had been shouting "Down with Rienzi!" there was not a finger stirred against him—such was the majesty of his calm demeanour. Adrian himself could not strike this man while he walked hand in hand with Irene!

Her face was pale, and her eyes bore traces of suffering as though she had feared for her brother's safety, or sorrowed over another's grief. Indeed, she had done both; and if Adrian could have looked upon her heart he would have seen a struggle as keen as the one he was undergoing; a grief whose reason would have caused him both pain and joy.

Just as Irene and Rienzi drew near to the door of the cathedral the crowd saw a startling scene. The Papal Legate came forth clad in the full regalia of the church and forbade them to enter. In a loud voice he pronounced a curse upon Rienzi. He was forbidden to partake of the sacrament or have any part in the church's privileges. All men, likewise, were forbidden to aid him in any way, lest they should incur a similar penalty.

This was what was known as excommunication. It was the severest punishment in the power of the church, and was usually directed only against criminals or desperate characters.

When Rienzi heard these unjust and unexpected words, he staggered back filled with amazement and horror. He had not looked for such reward as this for his great services, and he knew not which way to turn. The citizens on their part shrank away from him as from one smitten with the plague. Meanwhile, Adrian sprang to Irene's side.

"Come away with me!" he said gently. "The anathema was not directed against you, and I can conduct you to safety."

"No!" she cried, clinging the closer to her brother. "No! where he goes, there will I go! I will never forsake him or refuse to share his curses or his perils!"

"But you cannot protect him! Come while there is yet time!"

"No!" she again exclaimed, and, pressing to Rienzi's side, the brother and sister proceeded slowly down the street, while the crowd parted to right and left and watched them depart in sullen silence.

Though momentarily crushed by the blow, Rienzi was still undaunted. He believed that if he could yet gain the ear of the people he could win his cause with them, and then he would lay it in its true light before the Pope. Now his soul was filled with sorrow instead of anger, and as he went on his way he busied himself with new plans for the city's good.

"Let us go to the Capitol," he said in low tones to his sister. "There on the outer balcony I will address my people."

"No, no, dear brother, let us flee!" replied Irene. "Rome has been ungrateful and you owe her no further service. I pray you do not tarry in her gates!"

"And thus proclaim myself guilty?" answered Rienzi. "Not so. Besides, where could I go? Rome has been my one passion—my very life! Without her my life would be aimless. Ah, no! let me lay it down in her service, if she demands it, and it will be given gladly—if only Rome may rise up better for the gift!"

Irene shook her head sadly but did not remon-

strate further. In silence they drew near the Capitol and ascended its broad stone steps. The guards on each side saluted the Tribune as he passed. Once within, he gave certain orders to heralds who stood near, and went to an ante-room where he poured out his very heart in earnest prayer. But it was not for himself that he prayed: it was for the safety of his beloved Rome.

And how were the Romans requiting him? The news of the excommunication ran through the city like wildfire, and caused the most intense excitement. People talked of nothing else. Cecco and the other plotters made the utmost of it, assuring the crowds that Rienzi's many sins had found him out, and that he was too dangerous a man to be suffered to live another day.

Adrian, on the contrary, ashamed of his previous part, did all he could to turn the tide in favour of the wronged Tribune. But it was in vain. His own former words were shouted back against him, while the crowds that followed Cecco and the plotters constantly grew larger and more noisy. They had heard that the Tribune had taken refuge in the Capitol; and to their increasing cry of "Down with Rienzi!" was added the still more ominous one of "Burn the Capitol!"

Finally Adrian saw that only the most desperate means would save the Tribune's life; nothing short

of instant and secret flight would avail him. Hastening by side streets, the young nobleman burst into the Capitol, where he found Irene guarding the door to her brother's room.

"Where is Rienzi?" he said swiftly. "We must all flee! The people are coming with torches to burn the Capitol!"

"He is there, but he will not flee," she answered; "and my place is with him."

"Oh, Irene, Irene! Can you not see that my heart is burning up with love for you? I have loved you since that night I first saw you in the street. Come with me, I beseech you! We will implore your brother also to flee; but if he will not be persuaded, why need you sacrifice yourself?"

Then without waiting for her reply, he dashed past her into the room where Rienzi knelt in prayer.

"Come!" said Adrian, "the people are approaching to fire the Capitol! You and your sister will be lost, if you do not follow me by a secret way which I know. Listen! do you not hear the noise in the streets?"

The dull roar was indeed becoming louder and louder; but Rienzi only smiled.

"I am used to the people and do not fear them," he said. "But Irene, child, this is no place for you. I entreat you to go with this good friend."

Irene had also entered the room, and now flushed red, but said no word.

"I have asked her to go with me for always," said Adrian. "God knows how in this hour of distress I love her and will protect her! I pray you join your word with mine."

"Do you love this man, sister?" asked Rienzi, gazing at her kindly.

Irene bowed a silent "yes" and then burst into tears, clinging to her brother's hand.

"Then go with him," he continued, placing her hand in Adrian's. "I, too, have loved, and the object of my love has been Rome. As you two must cling to one another now, so must I cling to my unhappy city. Go!"

It was high time. The advance guard of the mob was already surging into the square. Without waiting a moment longer Adrian wrung his friend's hand and lifted the swooning form of Irene. Carrying her down a dim corridor and through the secret passage of which he had spoken, he bore her speedily to safety.

But Rienzi! Faithful to the last to his noble endeavour, the brave Tribune ascended the open balcony in full view of the people and tried to address them. But Cecco and the other demagogues would not permit this. They were afraid lest his matchless eloquence should once more win the people's hearts. Hooting and yelling, they picked up great stones and hurled them into the balcony where he

stood. Others of the mob applied torches to the balcony and other parts of the building. Soon the heavy smoke rolled up, and then the bright scorching flame. The smoke shut the dreadful scene from view, but in the light of the fire it again stood out clearly. There, with hands uplifted, Rienzi still sought to address the people. The splendid dreamer had no thought of flying from his martyrdom.

With a mighty crash the walls of the Capitol fell in—symbol of the destruction of the government. Long were the people to mourn their work of this day! A shower of burning embers rose into the sky, then slowly settled back again upon a grey and smoking pile. It was the tomb of the Last of the Tribunes.

The Flying Dutchman

(*Der Fliegende Holländer*)

HAVE you ever seen a full-rigged ship? What a creature of mystery and delight it is, as it rides at anchor! It seems to tell of distant shores and places far more wonderful than any we have ever seen. Then, as it spreads its broad white wings, it seems a thing of life, awaking out of sleep and eager to start again upon its travels. What majesty and beauty are then displayed as it turns and breasts the open sea—rising and dipping as though in challenge to its ancient enemy!

Our admiration for the ship is only heightened when we remember that for centuries such craft as this have ploughed the waves. They have discovered the uttermost ends of the earth. They have made all men neighbours, one with another,—sharing the fruits of the tropics with the grain of the colder zones. Ages before steam was put to use, sailing vessels much like this of the present time were busy in the service of man. And they will continue to serve him so long as men "go down to the sea in ships."

Seamen, since the beginning of time, have been a race unto themselves, having their own mode of life, customs and beliefs. They believe in lucky and unlucky days, signs, clouds, birds, and breezes; and so completely are they at the mercy of wind and wave, that we cannot marvel greatly at these superstitions. Above all they believe in an Evil Spirit of the sea, who delights to bring harm to mariners, send adverse winds and waves, and drag them down into the depths of the ocean. This Spirit, they say, can change a gentle breeze to a terrific gale in an instant. He can cause vessels to sink that have no leak. He can set strange lights ahead and thus lure a crew to dangerous reefs. Terrible is his wrath, also, if any sailor presumes to defy him. How this wrath was visited upon one reckless seaman is the subject of our present tale.

Many years ago a bold Dutch captain named Vanderdecken sailed the Southern ocean with a picked crew of hardy fellows. For months he traded in various ports until he grew exceedingly prosperous. The hold of his ship became so heavy with gold that the vessel set deep in the waves. Then Vanderdecken grew tired of his voyaging. He pictured to himself the joys of a cosy little home—such as his gold would buy—presided over by a loving wife. So he set all sail around the Cape of Good Hope, eager to reach his beloved Holland and bid the sea farewell.

But the Cape of Good Hope is ill-named, so mariners say, and it proved ill hope for Vanderdecken. A furious storm arose beating him directly in the face and keeping his ship from rounding the point of land. Again and again he turned his prow in the teeth of the gale, and tried to tack against it, but without success. Finally he became enraged and swore a fearful oath that he would sail around the Cape if it took him till doomsday.

The Evil Spirit heard this oath and laughed maliciously. He resolved to hold the captain to his word, and keep him sailing the ocean until the end of the world. So he cast a spell upon the whole crew, by which they could not die and their ship could not sink. Year in and year out they were compelled to sail wearily without ever reaching their journey's end. The ship grew crazy and worm-eaten, but still never sprang a leak. The sails were kept unharmed through magic, and in the course of time they became red as blood, as though all the life had been drawn from the hearts of the ghostly mariners who grew old and grizzled and shrivelled. They came to long for death, but all in vain would they face the gales with all sails set, or steer straight upon the angry reefs. On and on must they voyage, and but one ray of hope was left them. Their captain—who alone kept his youthful look—was told that if he could find a woman who would love

him and be faithful until death, the curse would be removed. Once in every seven years he was permitted to land; but if he found no one to become his wife, he was obliged to set sail again upon his weary voyage.

Time after time Vanderdecken sought for the one who would save him, but without success. His strange appearance and the tales told of his "Phantom Ship," as it was called, daunted even the bravest. All the maidens shuddered when he approached, for did not their fathers and sweethearts say that of all ill omens this black ship with its blood-red sails was the worst? It was always met in a storm or before some great disaster. Sailors would cross themselves as they told how it would be met driving furiously before a gale, and how the spectral crew would hail them and ask where they were—pretending to have lost both chart and compass. Then they would ask leave to send a package of messages and letters home by them; and without waiting for reply, the ancient-looking sailors would row over in a battered boat, caring naught how high the seas ran. After they left their letters and rowed back, the Phantom Ship would plunge onward, while the wind whistled through its rigging. The sailors with whom the letters were left would perforce try to deliver them, for though it was deemed unlucky to take them it

was still more unlucky to keep or destroy them. But no one to whom they were addressed was ever found, though often the old parish records would show there *had* been people of that name two hundred or, maybe, three hundred years before.

So the quest of the Phantom Ship passed into a proverb, and many were the tales told of its captain. He was known far and wide as the Flying Dutchman, and in the gloom of some gathering storm seamen spoke of seeing his pale face peering anxiously over the low prow of his black ship, seeking a way around the Cape of Good Hope. While at sunset, when the last rays tinged the dancing waves with ruddy glory, the children on the strand would be shown the Flying Dutchman's blood-red sail.

At the time when our story begins, a fierce storm had been raging in the North Sea. To escape its fury a stout Norwegian ship sailed hastily before the wind into the nearest port and cast anchor. Its captain, a stout weather-beaten man, was provoked at having to do this, as he was nearly home and anxious to get there and greet his only daughter, after a long voyage. Daland was the captain's name, and Senta that of his daughter. She had been left motherless when very young, and now lived quietly with her old nurse while her

father was away upon his voyages. Senta was a quiet, dark-eyed girl given much to day dreams on account of her somewhat lonely life. She was devoted to her father, and believed in him implicitly.

Daland was not a bad man, but he had one great passion, and that was for gold. His life-long desire was to be rich, and this desire led to his taking long voyages and braving many dangers. Nevertheless, his money did not accumulate so fast as he wished—does it ever do that?—and Daland was often discontented.

His last voyage had been anything but a success. His ship had met one adverse wind after another, and in two heavy storms it had come so near sinking that they were forced to throw overboard some of the cargo. And now when they were within forty miles of home, another gale sent them scudding into the wrong harbour. It was hard luck, but sailor-like they prepared to make the best of it. Daland allowed all the weary crew to go below and get a good rest. He himself followed their example, leaving only one man at the wheel.

The air was heavy, as it often is during a thunder-storm, and the dark clouds rolled fiercely across the sky. But within the bay the water was comparatively quiet, and the ship rode easily at her anchor. The gentle motion and still air were too much for the man on lookout, and he, also, went to sleep with his head leaning upon the wheel.

While he slept, the storm burst again with increased fury just beyond, in the open sea; and out of the teeth of the gale sped another ship coming straight for the same harbour. The rising waves leaped high on all sides of her low black hull, threatening to engulf her. But if you could have seen the crew at work, you would have noticed that they paid no heed to the tempest except to shake their fists, perhaps, in defiance of it. On they came, the wind howling shrilly through the rigging and tugging vainly at the bulging sails. And, marvellous to relate, every one of these sails was set, as though it had been a clear day instead of a time to scud with bare poles; and the sails were red as blood!

Not until they had entered harbour and were close alongside Daland's ship did the crew furl sail or cast anchor. So quickly and noiselessly was the canvas dropped that the ship rode at anchor before any of the other crew were even aware of their approach. Then a boat was lowered from the newcomer's side, and the captain entered it and was rowed ashore. He was a strange-looking man, with long black hair, heavy eyebrows, and a hunted expression about the eyes. His skin was fair, despite his many other evidences of long sailing, and he had a certain air of gentleness and sadness which lent him an attractive—almost handsome—appearance. His crew were even stranger in looks, for

they all seemed to be old men, grey and withered, despite the vigorous strokes with which they sent the long-boat flying through the waves.

As the boat grated upon the sand the captain breathed a great sigh of relief, and leaped ashore without heeding the shallow water between him and dry land. He walked with the stiffness of a man who has long felt under his feet only the rolling decks of a ship. The first rock he met, jutting out of the beach, he fell upon his knees and embraced, out of very gladness to be on firm ground! Then he mounted the crag and looked landward.

"Seven long years!" he mused. "Thank God, that I am permitted to set foot upon dry land once more! When will my weary voyaging cease, and I become free of this fickle ocean?"

It was, as you have doubtless guessed, the Flying Dutchman, home on another search for the woman who would release him from his spell.

Just then his musings were cut short by a voice hailing him. "Skipper, ahoy!" it said.

Daland had awakened out of his slumber and come on deck to find his helmsman asleep and the strange ship anchored close by. He was both startled and provoked, but seeing the captain on shore he now addressed him through a speaking trumpet.

"Whence come you?" he asked, seeing the stranger turn and look at him.

For answer, the Dutchman made a wide sweep with his arms and then beckoned to Daland. Something in his manner so aroused the latter's curiosity that he ordered a boat lowered and rowed over to the beach.

"My name is Daland, a skipper of Norway," he said. "Whence and who are you?"

"I am a Dutchman and I have been around the world since I last set foot here," answered the stranger in a low voice.

"I should think you would be glad to come ashore again," said Daland. "*I* am, for I've had a precious rough voyage of it. Did you meet any storms?"

The Dutchman smiled. "Nothing but storms," he said, "but my ship will weather the best of them."

"What cargo do you carry?" asked Daland, mindful of his own unlucky experience.

"Oh, weighty enough: I've been trading in gold and precious stones," said the stranger indifferently.

An eager look came into Daland's eyes. "I should think you would hate to throw over any of that!" he said.

"There are a good many things I value more highly," replied the other. "I have known the time when I would gladly give it all for a little corner of dry land where I might live in peace."

"And I," laughed Daland, "leave my little corner and cruise around the world in search of that same gold."

It was now the stranger's turn to become interested.

"Do you live near here?" he asked.

"Aye, just around the next headland. There's a cosy hearthstone and cheering cup awaiting me there, and I should have been there now, if it had not been for this wretched storm."

"Perhaps it has blown you a little good luck," replied the Dutchman; "that is, if you really care for money."

"What do you mean?"

"Just this. I was in earnest, awhile ago, when I said I would give all my gold for a plot of dry land. My heart is hungry for a bit of home life; and if you will let me be your guest while we are ashore, I shall make you a rich man."

"Do you mean that?" asked Daland, staring at him.

"I will pay you in advance," said the stranger. And he blew a shrill whistle to his crew and shouted out some orders in a strange tongue. In answer some of the curious-looking sailors ran down into the hold and came up again bearing a heavy chest which they brought to the strand and opened.

There before Daland's greedy eyes lay revealed

a glittering mass of precious stones and fine gold, richer than anything of which he had ever dreamed. His fingers twitched and he fairly gasped with amazement.

"Gorgeous!" he exclaimed. "You must be the happiest man in the world to have all that!"

"Happy?" said the other, in a sad voice. "Of what use is this treasure if I have no treasure of the heart—no home, no wife, no family ties? For years I have wandered alone, till my soul is weary; and what I have longed for, it has been beyond the power of this paltry stuff to supply!"

And the Dutchman snapped his fingers in contempt at the chest.

Daland who was really good of heart was touched by the stranger's words.

"Come home with me," he said. "With or without reward you shall have the best my modest table affords, and my daughter Senta shall cook and serve it with her own hands."

"Then you have a daughter?" asked the stranger turning quickly. "How old is she?"

"She is grown now, though I can scarcely think of her save as a little girl. Winsome is she, as all my neighbours say, and a better girl never lived. My will has been her law ever since her mother died."

"Hark you, man!" said the stranger, gripping

his hand and speaking swiftly and earnestly. "You must judge me by what you see of me. But if you will promise me your daughter's hand, provided I win her, all that this chest contains shall be yours!"

Daland looked at the stranger keenly. His clear-cut face and noble bearing told strongly in his favour.

"She is my only child," the Norwegian answered presently, "but I promise to further your suit. As you are generous, you show me a good and noble heart. Yes, I should be glad to see you my son-in-law. And were your wealth not half as great, I'd not choose another."

A glad smile broke over the wandering seaman's face as he heard these words. And as if in sympathy the sun broke forth from the bank of clouds in the western sky, the wind died down and the water grew calm.

"See! it is to be clear weather, after all!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, we can make the home harbour by nightfall. Come, let us weigh anchor and hoist sail!" said Daland.

"Lead on, and I will follow you presently. I have some sails to mend," replied the Dutchman. He well knew that his ship's strange appearance and red sails would arouse comment if he entered the harbour before night.

"So be it!" agreed Daland; and he went on board ship and ordered all sails set. Before a brisk little breeze his vessel scudded out of harbour, while the sailors, delighted with the prospect of soon being at home after their long, rough voyage, sang a rollicking song ending with the shout, "Hoho! Halloho!"

While her father's ship was nearing harbour that afternoon, Senta was in the midst of a merry group at her home. Several of her girl friends had come to pay her a visit, and, according to the quaint Norwegian custom, they had brought their spinning-wheels with them so that they might not be idle during the daylight hours. Now the wheels whirred and the maidens chattered at a lively rate. But strange to say, Senta was the idlest of the lot. Her hands would fall into her lap, and her gaze would wander into space. She was indeed a lovely picture as she sat thus, her great dark eyes glowing and the rich colour coming and going in her cheeks, called up by the romantic visions she saw.

"What, dreaming again, Senta?" exclaimed her old nurse and housekeeper, Maria, entering at one of these idle moments. "You are setting your visitors a fine example! And what if your father should come home and see you dawdling thus?"

Senta flushed, smiled, and took up her flax. The other girls laughed mischievously.

"You oughtn't to have told her that old ballad, Maria!" they said. "Now she can't get her mind off the Flying Dutchman. She sits here and gazes at his picture by the hour."

There was indeed an old print supposed to be a likeness of the wandering seaman, on the wall. It had been picked up with many other curious things by Daland upon his travels; and Maria who knew a ballad telling of the Dutchman's weary search for a wife had recited it to them. The story was just of the sort to attract Senta.

" 'Tis strange," she murmured, as though speaking to herself, "strange that the poor Flying Dutchmas is doomed to sail on forever, because he can find no one who will love him till death! Are we maidens, then, all so fickle and heartless?"

"No, we are not heartless, at any rate!" laughed one of the girls. "But who wants to wed the captain of a Phantom Ship that comes to port only once in seven years?"

"And who will outlive you, and marry some one else, a hundred years from now?" chimed in another.

"No, no!" said Senta; "that would be because you did not love him!"

"But who *could* love him—a ghost like that? Ugh!" said a third.

"*I* could!" exclaimed Senta, her fine eyes flash-

ing. "If I knew that I could save him, I would devote myself to him gladly!"

"Oh, Senta! What are you saying!" cried the girls in a chorus.

"You forget Erik!" said one.

Erik was a young hunter who lived in the mountains, and who was devoted in his attentions to Senta. She had always liked him, having grown up with him, but she had not given him all her love.

"No, I do not forget Erik," she said stoutly, "but he is not the Flying Dutchman."

"Nor do I want to be!" exclaimed a hearty voice, as Erik himself burst into the room. "What is this I hear, Senta? Be careful, or I shall grow jealous even of the Flying Dutchman!"

He greeted the visitors, and then continued: "But I just ran in to tell you that I sighted your father's ship rounding the headland, and back of it some distance is another vessel. Doubtless your father is bringing guests with him, so you had better tell the good Maria to bestir herself."

Senta jumped up and clapped her hands at the news of her father's return. Instantly the whole room was in confusion. The spinning-wheels were quickly set aside, and the maidens helped to bring the long table to the centre of the room and set it for the expected company. Then they hastily

gathered up their belongings and bade their hostess good-day, leaving her alone with Erik.

"What was this I heard about the Flying Dutchman, Senta?" he asked in a tender voice.

"I was just expressing pity for his lonely lot," she answered.

"Doesn't *my* loneliness awaken any pity, then?"

"You do not deserve so much sympathy," she said lightly. "You are young and strong and—well, almost any of the girls here to-day would show you some interest. But the poor wandering seaman is compelled to sail on till doomsday because nobody cares."

"Come, come, Senta, you must be jesting!" said the hunter, growing pale. "You surely cannot place this spectre ahead of all of us flesh-and-blood people in your regard!"

"Why does the thought alarm you so?" she said evasively.

"Because of a dream I had. It was so real that I have been able to think of nothing else all day."

"Was it about—*him?*"

"Yes, it was about the Flying Dutchman. I dreamed that your father came home from sea, bringing with him a mysterious stranger whom no one knew anything about, except that he was very wealthy. He was tall and gaunt, with pale face, flowing black hair and eager-looking eyes. As

soon as he saw you he could not keep these eyes off of you, and he asked for your hand in marriage."

"And I consented?" asked Senta breathlessly.

"Oh, Senta! Yes, you left me at once and went with him. I followed you down to the beach imploring you to stay. But the stranger took you on board his ship, and hoisted a blood-red sail. You were gone with the Flying Dutchman—lost—lost forever!"

"No, not lost!" she cried. "It was a vision! It was my destiny!"

"Senta! Senta!" cried Erik almost beside himself with grief; and unable to control his emotion longer he rushed from the house.

And then—as if in answer to the dream, Senta thought—presently the door opened and her father came in, and with him—the stranger! He was like Erik's description, even like the old print that hung upon the wall; and as he directed his gentle blue eyes to her face, Senta knew instinctively that this was none other than the Flying Dutchman himself.

Springing to meet her father, she hid her face upon his shoulder and burst into tears. Daland kissed her and patted her upon the cheek.

"There, little daughter!" he said. "Have you really missed your old daddy while he was away? Well, he has missed you, too. But you are forgetting your manners. You have not yet greeted our guest."

Senta had by this time regained some of her composure, and she now turned to the visitor and greeted him, but in a cold, constrained voice. She was in reality holding herself in check, for her whole heart went out to him.

But her father thought, "She is cold, the little minx! I must tell her my wishes in this matter, and hint about the chest of gold." The foolish old captain measured everything by gold—even his daughter's affection, but this only showed how little he understood her.

So, while the evening meal was being prepared and the stranger had been shown to his room to make himself ready, Daland took his daughter aside and told her what little he knew of the stranger; that he had been a wanderer without kith or kin; and that he had immense wealth and was now desirous of settling down and having a home of his own.

"He has asked me to receive him as a guest," Daland concluded; "and he has also obtained my permission to sue for your hand. Will you be obedient to my wish in this as heretofore, and consent to become his wife?"

"I will give my answer to him, father," she replied quietly, "after I learn from his own lips how much or little he needs me."

Daland was fain to be content with this reply,

but something in his daughter's tone reassured him, and he wisely decided not to press the matter further until the stranger had been given the chance to urge his own case.

There was an air of constraint about the evening meal, despite the host's attempts to be jovial after his long absence. 'Tis true Senta gave a willing ear to the story of his voyage, and asked questions from time to time which showed how anxious she had been for his welfare while he was away. But the guest courteously evaded all inquiries about his own wanderings, and though he strove to be agreeable, it was plain to see that he was long unaccustomed to quiet home life such as this.

Finally the supper was over, and Daland, saying that he had business that evening in the village, left Senta and the stranger alone.

Then the girl, with an almost bursting heart, heard her visitor cross the room slowly and come to her side.

"Senta!" he said—and there was both authority and entreaty in his low tone—"look at me!"

She raised her eyes and met his gaze unflinchingly and in that glance each saw the soul of the other laid bare and knew that each was beloved.

"Senta," he continued, taking her hand, "I am a plain, rough man of the sea, and know not how to mend my speech for gentle ears like yours. But

from the first moment I saw you, I loved you. And your father has already given his consent to my suit. What is your answer? Do I read your eyes aright?"

"Yes," she answered simply; "it was Fate that brought you to me."

The seaman felt a great wave of joy rush over him. He was loved! Freedom from the Evil Spirit was within his grasp! Then for the first time he realised how much he was asking of this innocent young girl. A curse was hanging over him; how could he ask one he loved to share it?

"Stay!" he said, gently releasing her hand, "I have no right to obtain your promise thus. You do not know who I am."

A bright smile broke over Senta's face.

"Ah, but I do!" she exclaimed.

"What! Is it possible that you know I am a wretched wanderer over the earth—"

"You have been," she said.

"That men look upon me with superstition and dread—"

"We will change all that."

"In short, that a curse is upon me? Hear me out!" (He raised his hand, as she was about to speak again.) "Hear me out, and then send me forth into the night, where I belong! I sought you selfishly to-day, to obtain your aid in the lifting of

this curse, of which I speak. The Evil One has decreed that I shall wander forever, unless some true woman gives me her love and remains faithful until death. If her faith in me should waver, the curse would descend upon her also. Before I had even seen you, I asked your father for you, and was willing to sacrifice you to my own selfish ends. I thought not at all of what I asked of *you!* I see now how selfish I was, and I release you. Will you not dismiss me, as I deserve? I shall remember you only with gratitude for the glimpse I have had of your brave heart."

"But do you not love me?" asked Senta.

"It is just because I do love you that I cannot ask this sacrifice," he replied, his pale face showing the struggle through which he passed.

"Then this is my answer. Here is my hand; my heart goes with it, and even to death will I be faithful!"

"She gives her hand, and promises to be faithful till death!" exclaimed the Dutchman, shaking his fist as if at some unseen foe. "Dost thou hear this —dread Spirit? I am free, and I defy thee!"

And falling upon his knees he pressed her hands again and again to his lips.

Just at this moment Daland re-entered the room, and was overjoyed at the turn of affairs. He gave the two his blessing, saying:

"To-morrow I give a feast to my sailors, according to custom; and with your permission I shall announce your betrothal at once."

The next day dawned bright and clear. On board the Norwegian ship all was bustle and activity. The sailors were dressing it in its finest pennants and colours, making it ready for the visit of the townspeople and for the feast. All was noise and laughter and song, for they were as delighted as schoolboys when the long-looked-for vacation has come.

But on board the Dutch vessel everything was as quiet as the grave. No one was seen stirring above decks, and not a flag fluttered except a single tiny one which told that the captain was gone upon shore.

Then a group of laughing girls came down to the beach. Most of them we have already seen at Senta's house. They brought great baskets of fruit and dainties to the sailors and when Daland's crew saw this treat they lost no time in coming on shore. But still the Dutchman's black ship gave no sign of life.

"What is the matter with your fellow-voyagers?" asked the maidens.

"No fellows of ours," answered the Norwegians, "we never saw them until yesterday, and they

haven't budged since they cast anchor last night."

"Hey, sleepy-heads!" called out the girls tauntingly. "Come out and be sociable!"

"You sleep like land-lubbers!" called a sailor.

But no answer came back.

"Let them alone," said another sailor; "if they don't care for good things to eat and drink, there will be just that much more for us."

"Greedy fellows!" laughed the girls.

"Well, if I was as old and grizzled as that greybeard crew yonder," said the one who had just spoken, "I wouldn't care for feasts either—nor yet for pretty girls." Here he gave a sly glance around.

"They look like the crew of the Phantom Ship," said another, laughing. And lifting his voice he called: "Ho there, old black ship! What has become of the Flying Dutchman?"

At this call a cold wind swept along the shore, so that all the merrymakers shuddered, and a nameless dread seized them. Then a strange thing happened. The waves in the harbour remained calm, while just around the black ship they rose and tossed angrily as though in a violent storm. It grew dark, the wind howled through the rigging, and weird blue lights played about the mast-heads. In the midst of the miniature tempest, the ship's crew appeared and began to hoist sail as though

preparing to depart; and as they worked they sang a dirge-like song that told of the Flying Dutchman and his seven-year quest. He was even now in search of the wife that would save them all, they sang.

This scene was too much for the merrymakers. The panic-stricken maidens fled in every direction, while the sailors seized with superstitious fear hastened to their ship and ran below, making the sign of the cross.

At sight of the panic, the strange crew burst into wild laughter, and the storm subsided as quickly as it had arisen, leaving the blue sky and clear water as before.

Just then the door of Daland's house opened, and Senta appeared and came down to the beach. She was followed by the hunter Erik, who had come to plead his cause once again. He could not bring himself to believe that his dream was coming true, and that Senta had plighted herself to the mysterious stranger, as he had just heard. He reminded her of their lifelong comradeship, and how he had, even as a little boy, claimed her as his future wife.

"Indeed you do belong to me!" he exclaimed, carried away by his emotion. "You gave me your heart—you know you did! Now you cannot take it away and give it to a stranger!"

"Oh, Erik! you misjudge me!" Senta replied,

wounded deeply by his words. And sorry for his evident distress she tried to comfort him with sympathy and tenderness. She could not bear to see her old playmate suffer, or have him think badly of her.

Her attitude, however, was misunderstood by a third person who had approached unnoticed. It was the Flying Dutchman. He now believed that Senta was already regretting her promise to him, and with a wild, despairing cry of "Lost! All lost!" he sprang down the beach and prepared to take boat for his ship.

"What do you mean?" asked Senta, hastening towards him.

"Farewell, Senta!" he cried. "To sea, to sea, till time is ended! I release you from your promise! It is the only way I can save you from my fate!"

"Ah, do not go!" implored Senta. "I will not take back my word. I love you, love you! I knew you from the first moment I saw you, and whereso-ever you go, there will I go!"

"Think what you are saying, Senta!" exclaimed Erik, trying to restrain her. "They say that he and his ship are bewitched!"

"I care not for that! My place is by his side!" she said, struggling to free herself.

"Be advised by your friend," said the seaman, who had mastered his own emotion in some meas-

ure. "I am indeed under a spell. Ask any mariner who sails the seas, and he will tell you, with a shudder, to beware of the Flying Dutchman!"

But Senta did not shrink back as he expected. Instead she stretched out her arms triumphantly, crying, "Ah, I told you I knew you! Now you cannot go and leave me! I will save you in spite of yourself!"

Nevertheless the Dutchman turned away as though pushed forward by some unseen power.

"No! 'tis I who must save you!" he exclaimed. And going aboard his ship hastily he blew his whistle and ordered the ship to be got under way.

It had grown dark again, but through the gloom the blood-red sails glowed like a flame, while a strange signal-light burned in the prow, and the waves lapped eagerly about the bow as it began to move forward.

With a shriek Senta endeavoured to follow, but Erik and her father, who had just run up with other villagers, held her back. The Phantom Ship was now fast leaving the harbour and directing its course to the headland, when Senta by a quick movement wrenched herself free and fled swiftly along the shore to the jutting point of rock.

"Senta, you are beside yourself!" the others cried, trying to follow her. But she outdistanced them all, leaping over boulders and across chasms in her flight, till she had reached the headland.

The Phantom Ship was close beneath her in the seething spray.

"Senta!" cried Erik, hastening to the point of rock where she stood.

But she did not heed him. Instead, she stretched out her arms once more to the pale-faced man, standing in the prow of the oncoming vessel.

"Here stand I, faithful even unto death!" she exclaimed, a heroic light shining in her dark eyes. "Give thanks to heaven that one way was left for your salvation!"

With this she flung herself from the cliff into the raging sea. And instantly—wonder on wonder!—the waves grew calm. One last leap they gave as she touched them, and the Phantom Ship and all in it sank as she disappeared from view. But to the watchers on the shore a beautiful picture was given, which sent them their separate ways with peace in their hearts.

Above the spot where the Phantom Ship had gone down, never to be seen again, a rosy light hovered, making as it were a path leading straight through the bursting clouds to the bright sky beyond. And in this glory two figures were seen hovering, locked in each other's arms and rising upward. They were the radiant spirits of Senta and the lover she had saved. The Flying Dutchman's voyages were ended; the curse was lifted from him for evermore.

Tristan and Isolde

(*Tristan und Isolde*)

ONCE upon a time a brave knight of Brittany went across the English Channel to the court of King Mark of Cornwall. The knight was noted for his valiant deeds, so the King was right glad to welcome him and attach him to his retinue. The knight also was willing to tarry, for the King had a sister who because of her beauty was called the "White Lily." Indeed, the knight had fallen deeply in love with this fair Princess, and so he was overjoyed when at length he found that his love was returned. He obtained the King's consent to make her his wife; and after a splendid ceremony the knight and his lady set sail for their castle in Brittany. Fate had so smiled upon them, that they thought themselves the happiest people in the whole world, and that none had been so favoured as they.

But after a few short months of wedded life the knight fell sick and died. The poor bride was

It will be interesting to compare this story with the version by Malory. The differences are characteristic of the distance between the colder ideals of Malory and the warmer and more human age of Wagner.

broken-hearted, and although a little boy was presently given to her, the child did not assuage her grief. Instead he reminded her constantly of the husband she had lost. She called the boy's name Tristan, which means "sadness."

Realising that she would soon follow her beloved husband she entrusted the boy to a trusty knight, Kurneval by name, to be taken over to her brother in Cornwall. Shortly afterward she died, and the little orphan was conveyed to his uncle as the mother had desired.

King Mark was without wife or children of his own, so he gladly received Tristan into his lonely home. He brought him up as his own son, and publicly proclaimed him heir to the throne of Cornwall.

Tristan grew rapidly in beauty and strength, finding so especial a delight in horsemanship and knightly warfare, that by the time he was fifteen he could joust with the best of the knights. Courteous in speech and bearing was he, likewise, for he had been carefully trained by the knight Kurneval. And so, when the time of his knighting had arrived, Sir Tristan was already famed for his chivalry and prowess alike. His name became a proverb for true knighthood, and there was no man in Cornwall who could stand against him.

A few years before this time, King Mark had

been defeated in battle by the King of Ireland, and had promised to pay him a yearly tribute. Each year since that defeat the tribute had been collected by Sir Morold a gigantic knight whom all men feared because of his courage and cruelty. His demands grew heavier, year by year, until at last they became so great that the whole country groaned. Thus it went on until Tristan had become a knight, when eager for some splendid service to prove his spurs, he resolved to put an end to this oppression. So he challenged the huge warrior to mortal combat.

The challenge was promptly accepted, Morold liking nothing better than a fight, though—as he expressed it—he greatly feared this rash youth would not last long enough to get his blood warm. King Mark was also fearful of the fate of his foster-son, but the word had gone forth and could not be withdrawn.

The day came for the conflict, and many anxious spectators assembled to watch the champions fight —the one for the honour of Ireland, the other for the freedom of Cornwall. But Morold did not enter the lists fairly. Enraged that any one should presume to oppose him, he bore a poisoned spear which he flung at Tristan without warning. It made a slight wound which was unnoticed in the heat of the conflict that immediately began.

The young knight sprang forward with sword drawn and met his towering opponent fiercely but with the most finished skill. Morold soon found that he had met more than his match at sword play, and he tried by his superior strength to beat down his antagonist. But in this also he was defeated, after a thrilling contest. At last growing rash he raised his sword and brought it about with a terrific swish that would certainly have cut Tristan in two, if he had not leaped nimbly backward. Before the Irish knight could recover himself, Tristan sprang forward again and by one swift stroke cut his head from his body.

Cornwall was now free, and instead of sending his yearly tribute, King Mark sent the head of Morold back to Ireland to show this freedom for all time to come. Now Morold had been betrothed to an Irish Princess named Isolde; and when his severed head was received at court, she swore bitter vengeance against the one who had done this deed. Looking closely at the head, she chanced to find a bit of sword-point sticking in the skull, and she knew this must have been broken from the weapon which had done the deed. So she kept the sword-point carefully by her, in the hope that it might lead her to find her enemy.

Meanwhile Tristan, though showered with praises from the court and people he had delivered,

was faring but ill. The wound from the poisoned spear refused to heal. The best physicians of the country were called in, but the wound only grew more grievous and painful, day by day. Finally, when Tristan was beginning to despair of his life, an old soothsayer told him to go to the land whence the wound was received and there he would find an antidote for the poison. So Tristan set forth without delay; but knowing that it would not be safe for him to travel in Ireland under his own name, he went alone as Tantris a wandering minstrel.

The fame of Isolde's skill in mixing draughts and potions presently reached his ears, and he directed his steps to the court. Both Isolde's mother and maid-servant knew the secrets of drugs and they had taught her many of these arts. So when a poor minstrel came to her attention, suffering from a poisoned wound, both her sympathy and skill were enlisted, and all the more because he seemed of noble bearing, and his eyes sought hers in an appealing way.

So Isolde called in her maid and they undertook to heal Tristan of his wound, applying many balsams and soothing herbs. It was a long time, however, before even their skill availed and the harper began to rally from his illness.

It chanced one day while he slept, that Isolde sat

by his side watching the progress of his fever. And as she sat there she happened to notice the beauty of his sword-hilt, and wishing to examine it closely she drew the sword from its scabbard. Suddenly she saw that a piece was missing from the point. A thought occurred to her that made the blood rush to her head. She hastened to the place where she had concealed the broken piece, and placed it in the gap. It fitted exactly. She had been nursing her sworn enemy!

Just then Tristan called to her, and she turned and went to his bedside with the blade uplifted ready to strike. Neither spoke, but he read her purpose to slay him in her face and action; yet he did not flinch. He merely looked up sadly and tenderly with those eyes which she had found it hard to resist, the first time she ever saw him. And instantly, she knew not why, the sword fell from her hand clashing upon the floor.

After that she continued to nurse him more tenderly than ever, but without either of them saying a word about the incident. Her care and skill were rewarded, and at last Tristan was wholly recovered and ready to set sail for home. Still he did not speak to the Princess of the strange new feeling that possessed him, for he thought that only pity on her part, for his defenceless state, had saved his life on that day when she guessed the truth.

He contented himself with thanking her in the best phrases his oddly faltering tongue could repeat; begged permission to kiss her hand in token of the gratitude he could not utter; and asked leave to return upon some future day.

When he had come to the court of Cornwall, he found the King overjoyed to see him, for he had given him up as dead. To the King and court he related his adventures, praising without stint the beauty and kindness of the Princess Isolde. Indeed he spoke with such youthful enthusiasm that it unwittingly set his hearers to thinking. Some of the courtiers had long been jealous of Tristan and wished to keep him from the throne. They had been trying to persuade the King to seek a wife and thus provide a son of his own for the kingdom. Now they urged him to ask for the hand of the Princess Isolde. It would cement the peace of the two kingdoms, they said, and from all accounts she was indeed worthy to be his Queen.

King Mark pondered long over this advice, and asked many questions of the unsuspecting Tristan; and the more the monarch thought of it, the more the picture of Isolde filled his fancy. Finally he decided to send a formal request for her hand; and as Tristan was familiar with the Irish court he was entrusted with the embassy.

The request of the King sent a sudden chill

through Tristan's heart. He realised all at once how much Isolde meant to him. But his uncle had been a father to him, and he could not requite his kindness in any other way than by obedience. So he gave no outward sign, and prepared to execute his hard task.

When messengers came to Isolde and told her that Sir Tristan was come to seek audience with her, her heart leaped for joy. Surely, she thought, he had come in his own proper guise, as he promised, to say the things he dared not utter when he went away. So she hastened to greet him and show him all graciousness. But when she learned the truth of his errand, her new hopes were dashed. Anger and pride took their place, that she should be rejected by this man whom she had cared for—and pardoned despite her oath of vengeance! But hiding her emotions she instantly resolved to go to King Mark and become his Queen, without letting the world—least of all, Sir Tristan—know how she suffered.

To the King and Queen of Ireland the news of the embassy was welcome. They had become weary of the feud with Cornwall and were glad to conclude the peace and ally their house with that of King Mark. They received the ambassador, therefore, with every sign of honour, and held feasting and revelry until he should conduct the Princess to his ship.

But through it all Isolde remained cold and silent. Her conduct alarmed her mother, who wished her to be contented in the new home she was entering. So the Queen brewed a powerful love potion which she entrusted to Isolde's maid, Brangeane, telling her to give the potion to Isolde and her husband on the day of their wedding, when it would fill their hearts with mutual love and cause their after lives to be happy.

So Tristan conducted Isolde to his ship and set sail for Cornwall; and of the deep love which had come to fill his own heart he uttered no word; nor so much as by a look or sign would he betray the trust reposed in him by his uncle the King. Indeed, Tristan went to the farther side of caution, and when the Princess was once upon shipboard he did not linger in her presence or speak with her, but busied himself with the steering of the vessel.

This courteous reserve Isolde did not understand. She had been accustomed, all her life, to much attention and to seeing her lightest wish obeyed. And now it angered her more than ever that Tristan—who owed her so much—should treat her like the veriest stranger. She endured his neglect in sullen silence until the last day of the voyage, when the ship was within sight of the shores of Cornwall. Then despair at the thought of becoming the bride of a man she had never seen, and

anger at the conduct of Tristan, overcame her. In a violent outburst she lamented her fate and wished that the waves could rise and swallow her up.

Brangeane her maid was alarmed at this unusual mood and endeavoured to calm her. Finally Isolde raised her head and looked out through the doorway. She was in a pavilion on a raised portion of the deck, which commanded a view of the entire ship. As she looked, her eyes rested upon Sir Tristan who stood at the wheel steering the vessel. His brown muscular arms were bare, as also was his head save for a wealth of soft brown curls. A cloak fastened about his shoulders swept in graceful folds to his feet. His whole frame spoke of grace and strength. But his clear blue eyes, fastened intently upon the vessel's course, had a tense look, almost stern in their sadness. He seemed, indeed, to be fighting a hidden grief.

Isolde pointed to him and asked mockingly of Brangeane:

"What think you of our fine hero?"

"Who—Sir Tristan, my lady? He is said to be the bravest and knightliest man in Christendom."

"I care not what they say. He is an arrant coward!"

"Oh, my lady!"

"He is a coward, I tell you! Afraid to meet a woman's eyes! Conducting me to his royal mas-

ter as though I were some kitchen wench! Go you to him and ask him why he has neglected our presence and treated us so coldly."

"Shall I request him to attend upon you?"

"No. *Command* him! Tell him it is the Princess Isolde who speaks!"

The maid was reluctant to deliver this message, and walked slowly along the deck. But finally she paused beside the wheel and said:

"A message, my lord, from the Princess Isolde."

"Isolde!" Tristan started at the name and almost released the wheel. Then recovering himself quickly he asked: "What is my lady pleased to say?"

"She commands you to wait upon her."

Tristan paid no heed to the wording of the message, but bade the maid excuse him in all courtesy to her mistress, saying that he could best serve her at that moment by steering the vessel safely between the dangerous rocks which lay off the coast of Cornwall.

The gruff old knight, Kurneval, who had attended Tristan upon the voyage, broke into a scornful laugh when he chanced to hear the message of the Princess.

"'Command' forsooth!" he exclaimed. "The slayer of Morold is the vassal of no one, be she even a queen!"

Isolde overheard this speech, and when her maid returned to her, bearing Tristan's refusal, her passion knew no bounds.

"Do you know who this ingrate is, who cannot find a moment's time for me?" she cried. "He is the minstrel whose life I saved in Ireland, and whom you helped me to nurse!"

"Can it be possible!" exclaimed Brangeane. "But 'tis strange that I did not know him again!"

"That is not the strange part," continued Isolde, storming. "I had sworn to take vengeance upon the slayer of Sir Morold. I found out that *he* was the slayer, and yet I pardoned him! And this is his gratitude!"

"My lady, my lady!" said Brangeane, trying to soothe her mistress. "Perchance Sir Tristan is not to blame for this. He is serving his King; and he shows you only the more honour, that he should woo you for the King instead of for himself."

"But I care not a whit for the King! Why should they all be forcing me into this loveless marriage—into a life of misery?"

"No, no, not that!" replied Brangeane eagerly. "It is your mother's dearest wish that you should be happy. See this casket? It contains a love potion which she brewed for you, and which will fill your heart and that of your husband with the truest devotion."

The sight of the potion diverted Isolde's mind into other channels. It reminded her that she herself could brew drinks and mix powders. She began at once to prepare a deadly poison, quietly telling her maid that it would make her forget her unhappy past.

By the time she had finished brewing this drink of death the ship had almost reached its anchorage; and Kurneval entered to announce that they would speedily land, and that Sir Tristan awaited to escort her to the King.

Isolde drew herself up proudly.

"Go back to Tristan," she said, "and say that we await him here. We will not leave this place until he appears to offer an apology for his rudeness!"

Kurneval was moved to make some retort to this, but deeming that diplomacy was the wisest plan he returned to Tristan and advised him to wait upon the irate Princess.

Isolde, meanwhile, handed the poison flask to her maid, saying, "When he comes, give us to drink from it. We have much to forget, and I would be at peace with the world this day."

"Oh, my lady! What is it you would have me do?" asked Brangeane, terrified by her mistress's manner. But Isolde pressed her hand reassuringly.

At that moment Tristan entered, and with tones of the deepest respect he asked what the Princess's will was with him. But Isolde was in no mood to temporise, and she reproached him haughtily for his treatment of her during the voyage, asking what he meant by such neglect to her station.

It was such language as one would address to an underling, and Sir Tristan drew himself up with quiet dignity, replying that it was the custom in his country, when an ambassador brought a bride home to his lord, to refrain from intruding his presence during the journey.

Isolde replied scornfully, that if he was such a strict observer of custom, he would do well to recall one other which he had overlooked.

"What is that?" asked Tristan.

"The blood ransom," she answered, "for the life of Sir Morold!"

"But that feud is healed!" he responded quickly. "There is now peace between Cornwall and Ireland."

"But not between Tristan and Isolde!" she retorted. And she recalled to him the time when he had sought her care in disguise; how she had discovered his identity by the broken sword, and yet had spared his life and kept his secret when her own land was filled with his enemies. His life, she now claimed, was still forfeit to her.

Tristan had listened to her with varied emotions, but had made no move to interrupt her. Now with an indescribable air of sorrow and hurt pride he drew his sword and presented it to her, handle foremost.

"It is the same weapon that slew Sir Morold in fair fight," he said. "If you so bitterly regret his death and your previous kindness to me, I pray you slay me!"

"Nay!" she answered, her face growing pale and red by turns. "Such deed would ill requite King Mark, whose ambassador you are. But we will declare a truce, if you will drink the usual cup of peace with me before we land."

And turning to Brangeane she commanded her to pour out a drink. The maid, pale and trembling, turned to fill the cup. Sounds from without now told them that the vessel was coming to anchor. Isolde took the cup and handed it to Tristan.

"Your unwelcome voyage is over," she said darkly, looking into his eyes, "will you drink with me?"

Tristan took the cup. He knew that Isolde had been plotting his death, and he now suspected that the drink was poisonous. Yet death seemed welcome to him at this moment.

"I thank you," he said calmly. "I drink in glad-

ness, giving you my oath of truce for all time—the honour and the pain of Tristan!"

He put the cup to his lips and began to drink. But before he had drunk half its contents, Isolde with a suppressed cry snatched it from his hands and drained the rest. Then the massive cup fell to the floor, unheeded, and the two stood silent, looking at each other.

Only a few moments they remained thus, and yet it seemed ages to them. The drug had begun to take effect in a strange, unaccountable way. Instead of the icy chill of death, which they had expected to sweep through their veins, there came a wonderful tingle of life and love and bliss, all intermingled in a splendid wave drawing each nearer to the other.

"Tristan!"

"Isolde!"

The cries burst from their lips, as though they were in a trance; and forgetful of the whole world without, each sprang forward and was clasped in the other's arms.

"Alas! What have I done?" moaned Brangeane, wringing her hands. In her terror at giving the brew whose contents she feared, she had poured the love potion in its stead. Now she dreaded lest it should be the more fatal of the two in its consequences. But there was no way of escape.

The voices of the sailors and soldiers on the near-by shore proclaimed the fact that King Mark was at hand. Brangeane hastily seized the robe and crown, which Isolde was to wear, and placed them upon her mistress, urging her to make herself ready.

Awakened from her brief dream of happiness, Isolde suffered herself to be clad in the royal attire and led forward, weak and almost fainting, to meet her future husband.

The generous and courtly King received her with every consideration. Noting that she was faint and pale, which he thought due to the voyage, he ordered rooms in his castle to be set aside for her and her maids; and he postponed the betrothal feast and other public events until she should be strong enough to undergo them. He and all his court were delighted with this fair Irish Princess, and looked forward to the time when she should adorn their throne.

The rooms set aside for her use were the choicest in the castle, opening directly out upon a private garden. Here the Princess was glad to take refuge for a few days, and thus put off the wedding as long as possible. She knew now that it was the love potion she and Tristan had swallowed, and so violent was her passion that she felt she could not live without seeing him. So she pre-

vailed upon Brangeane to set a signal for her lover. A light was to be left burning in the window of the tower, and when it was extinguished Tristan knew that he would find Isolde in the garden. His love was no less ardent than hers, and he impatiently awaited the secret meeting.

Now there was one knight in the court who had long tried to supplant Tristan in the King's favour. His name was Melot, and he was wily and treacherous. Always on the watch to trip up Tristan in some way, he had noticed his confusion and Isolde's weakness when the ship had come to land, and had rightly guessed the cause. So he now sought to surprise the lovers at a meeting and then inform the King.

Brangeane had noticed Melot's manner and warned her mistress against him, but Isolde was intent upon nothing else than seeing Tristan again. Scarcely was darkness come, upon the eventful evening, when she bade the maid put out the light which was to summon him; and when Brangeane hesitated, she herself extinguished it.

It was a beautiful moonlit night in early summer, when the flowers were in their first freshness and fragrance. It seemed to the Princess that all nature was rejoicing in her love. She was not, however, paying heed to the blossoms on every side. She was pacing eagerly back and forth listening for

a welcome footfall. She had not long to wait, for Tristan sprang quickly through the shadows to meet her. Gladly the two greeted each other, without reserve, and wandered together down the path talking in low earnest tones of the happiness that had come to them. Isolde confessed that she had planned his death upon that fateful day on shipboard; while Tristan said he had expected nothing less, and would have welcomed it at her hands.

Meanwhile the faithful maid had been left upon the tower to keep watch. Several times she called in low warning tones that they would best not linger, but the lovers paid no heed to her, until Brangeane suddenly gave a cry of alarm. At the same instant Kurneval rushed upon the scene with drawn sword, imploring Tristan to fly. But it was too late; the sound of horns was heard, and the King and Melot appeared, followed by a hunting party.

Isolde, covered with shame, sank upon the ground. Tristan stood in front of her trying to shield her, but his own head was bent in trouble and he did not meet the King's gaze.

"What does this mean?" demanded the latter.

"It means that my doubts have been correct, your Majesty!" answered Melot. "Sir Tristan has not been as faithful a servant as you supposed!"

Grief was stronger than anger in the King's heart. He had loved Tristan like a son, and had

gloried in his knightly honour. He told Tristan this, in a quiet yet stern voice, and ended by banishing him from the kingdom.

Tristan was almost heart-broken. He realised that his punishment had been but just, and yet he seemed as though one in a dream, powerless to stem this current which was sweeping him away. He did not answer the King, but, instead, turned to Isolde and asked her if she would go with him into exile. She replied that wherever he went, there would she go, even to death itself.

At this new proof of her devotion Tristan's joy swept away all his doubts and fears. He drew her tenderly to him and turned proudly to face the King and his party.

"May the King and my foster-father pardon me out of his great kindness," he said in a low tone, "but Isolde has elected to follow me, and I can do nothing less than protect her. Farewell!"

The King still stood a prey to conflicting emotions. But the traitor Melot, enraged at the turn of affairs, sprang forward, drawing his sword and crying, "Think not to scape so easily, villain! I will avenge the King!"

"Ha, it is *you,* traitor, who would protect the King's honour!" said Tristan haughtily. "Defend yourself, Melot!"

He drew, and the weapons clashed sharply. But

only for a moment did they meet. Tristan purposely lowered his guard, and before any one could interpose, Melot had struck him with his sword.

"Disarm him!" commanded the King, himself seizing Melot's arm. Tristan, sorely wounded, sank to the ground, Isolde clinging to him and supporting his head, while Kurneval strove to raise his stricken master.

King Mark gave orders to certain of his attendants to wait upon Kurneval, and then strode slowly and sorrowfully away. He realised all too late the injustice he had done his nephew in sending him upon the embassy, but he could not understand this breach of faith; it was so unlike Tristan's knightly honour. It seemed to the old King that he regretted this more than the loss of his fair young bride.

Kurneval lost no time in conveying his master to the ancestral home in Brittany. Tristan had become unconscious, and only the promptest care could save his life. Kurneval vainly tried to nurse him back to health, but he had made the mistake of leaving Isolde in Cornwall. For her Tristan continually called in his delirium, and her skill and loving care would alone avail to save him. Kurneval soon realised this and sent messengers entreating her to come to Brittany; and now with

the return of the next ship he expected her to arrive.

On the day when the ship was looked for, Tristan who had awakened out of his fever, but was very weak, lay under a linden-tree. He had wished to look at the blue sky again, and Kurneval had carried his couch out in the courtyard. The place had long been deserted and was now overgrown with vines and bushes. The ancient tower was crumbling, and the huge drawbridge was in ruins. But to Kurneval this was home, and he hoped that the pleasant air and old surroundings would benefit his master.

Tristan was more nearly himself to-day, and asked many questions about how he had come here, how long it had been, and when the Lady Isolde was coming. Kurneval told him everything, and said that the Princess was looked for, that very day.

A smile broke over Tristan's face at this. "Ah! then I will live!" was all he said, and sank into slumber again.

Meanwhile a shepherd played upon his pipe, on the rocks below the castle, looking out to sea. The melody was low and plaintive, and as Kurneval listened to it his heart sank; for he had posted the shepherd there and bidden him play thus sadly so long as there was no sail in sight. Now he knew

that if Isolde did not come that day, the sun would set upon his master for the last time.

And now, in his delirium, Tristan was telling of the ship which was bringing Isolde from Cornwall.

"Do you not see it?" he asked. "Look! the sails are all filled up, and the ship is steering straight for us. How high the waves pile up about the bows! There on deck is *her* pavilion, just as it was on that other lonely voyage. And see! there she stands looking eagerly toward me, her hair garlanded with flowers and her arms outstretched! It is my Isolde! *Mine!* She is forsaking all the world and its thrones to come to the side of a poor outcast. Ah, why is that music so sad? They should pipe merrily upon my wedding-day!"

As if in answer to his last words, the shepherd on the lookout suddenly changed his tune and piped shrilly and merrily. The faithful Kurneval sprang to his feet and ran hastily to the rocks. Yes, there was a broad sail and it was heading straight for them. And on the deck stood a slender, white-robed figure that waved a scarf. Unable to restrain himself, Kurneval hastened back to the sleeping knight.

"My lord, my lord!" he exclaimed, shaking him gently. "Awake! a ship is sailing straight to the foot of the castle. We hope it may be the Lady Isolde!"

"Yes, it is my dear lady," answered Tristan, sitting up. "I saw her in my dreams. Go to her and welcome her in my stead. Hasten, good Kurneval, hasten!"

Kurneval urged him to be as quiet as possible, and went to obey his commands. But Tristan could not be patient. Not knowing what he did, he rose from his couch, in his exertion tearing his bandages loose and causing his wound to bleed afresh. He staggered halfway across the courtyard, dizzy but unconscious of pain; for clear as a bell, from the rocks below, he heard his beloved's voice: "Tristan!"

"She is coming—my Princess!" he muttered. "That is the voice I have heard in my dream."

He tried to answer her, but could not. His knees tottered beneath him and he groped blindly as if in the dark.

"Tristan!" called the voice, nearer this time.

"Isolde!" he answered softly, as he sank to the earth.

But the voice, weak as it was, had reached his beloved's ears, for she was bending over him trying to raise him up and imploring him to speak to her once again.

"See, I am here, Tristan—my heart's delight! I came as speedily as might be, but oh! how slow the ship sailed! Did you not hear my heart calling

to you, day and night, Tristan, Tristan, Tristan! Now you will get well—you *must* get well—and we will be ah! so happy here in Brittany! But are you not glad to see me? Beloved, answer me."

But the voice she so longed to hear again was stilled forever. Isolde tried in vain to rouse him, then a terrible dread seizing her, she sank unconscious across his lifeless body.

At this moment Kurneval was called from the pathetic sight by a great commotion outside; and the shepherd ran to him crying that a second ship had come to land and armed men were disembarking, followed by one who seemed to be a King. Kurneval's first glance told him that it was King Mark himself. Fearing in his own wild grief that the monarch was pursuing the two lovers, he resolved to defend the castle gate to his last breath.

The first man to appear was Melot. Kurneval drew his sword and rushed upon him.

"Back, thou cursed spy!" he exclaimed.

"Peace, fool!" said Melot. "Unbar the gate!"

"Not to such as thee!" retorted the old knight, and began to engage him fiercely.

"Stop them! We come in peace!" called out the voice of King Mark.

"Mistress! Isolde!" It was Brangeane's voice that was now heard.

But the two combatants fought on. Presently Melot's sword inflicted an ugly wound.

"Ha, master, I will avenge you yet!" cried Kurneval. And with a last mighty stroke, delivered as he sank to the ground, he gave Melot his death wound. Then the old knight crept slowly to his master's side and tried to make one last stand there, but sank back and breathed his last.

Just then King Mark burst in at the gate, and paused stricken with remorse at the scene which greeted his eyes. Brangeane, sobbing aloud, ran to her mistress and tried to revive her. The maid was frantic with remorse for she felt as though this tragedy was due to her. She had confessed to the King the secret of the love potion, and he had at once set sail to assure the lovers of his pardon and affection. He understood all at last, but now it was too late.

Brangeane brought her mistress to consciousness, and implored her to greet the King.

"He comes as your friend, and Sir Tristan's," she said; "he is here to aid you."

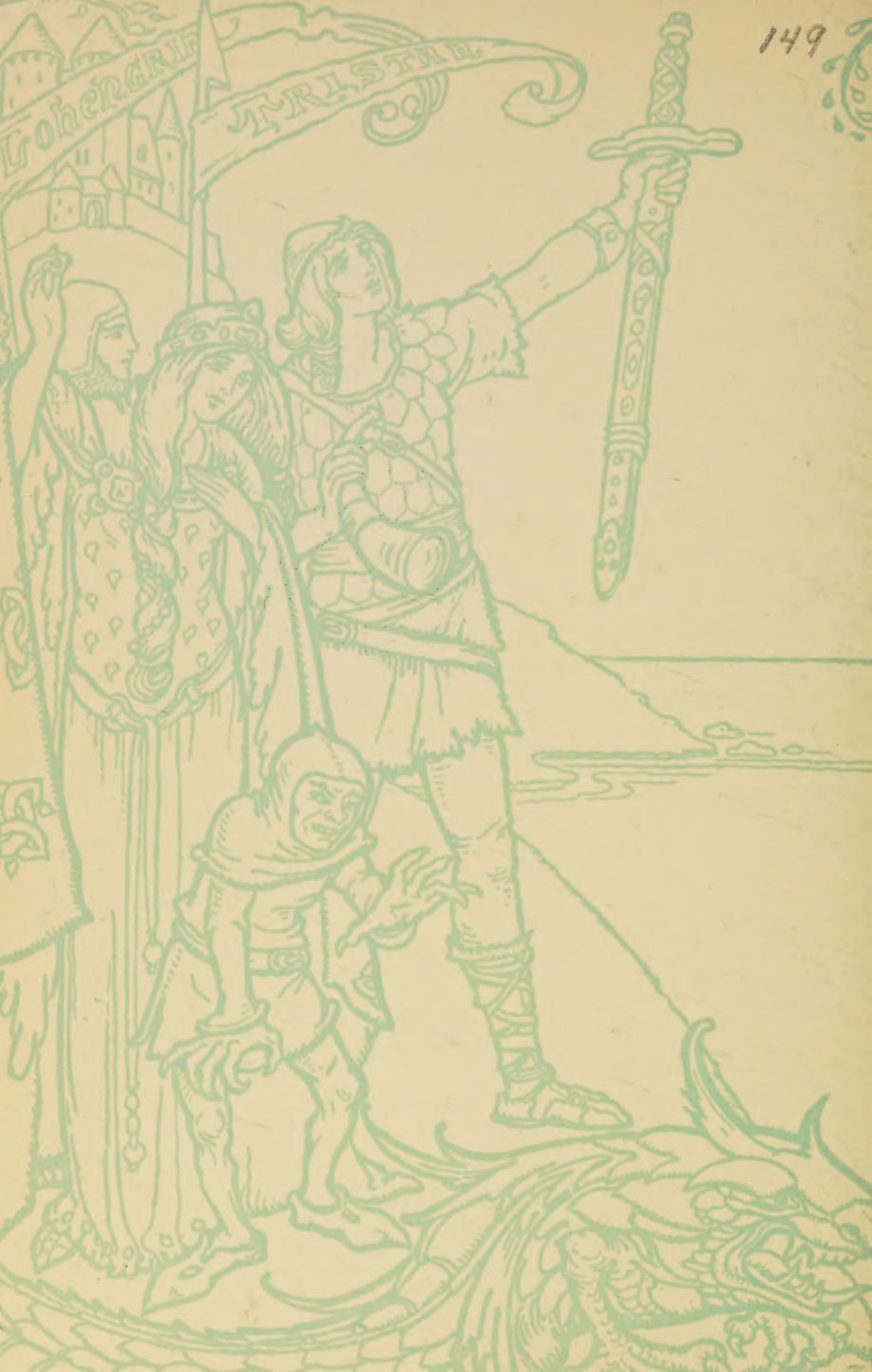
King Mark then hastened to speak to her, gently and kindly. In his courtesy he asked her pardon for the harm he had unwittingly done.

But Isolde paid no heed to his words. Her gaze was fixed upon Tristan, and when she spoke it was in praise of his constancy and truth. Then she told of a glorious land to which they both were going, where they should dwell free from sorrow and care and heart-break.

"I know not where it is," she murmured, "but I know my Tristan will be there, and that will be for me a bliss supreme!"

A radiant smile overspread her face as she ended, and with a soft sigh her heart broke and she sank down and nestled her head close against that of Tristan. And while a sunset glory shone through the trees of the old courtyard and illumined the scene, as though it were some radiant picture, those who stood by fancied they could hear strains of music. Near and yet far-off it sounded, clear and sweet, rising in soft waves as though bearing the souls of these two weary pilgrims to the land of rest and eternal love.

THE END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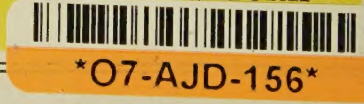
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